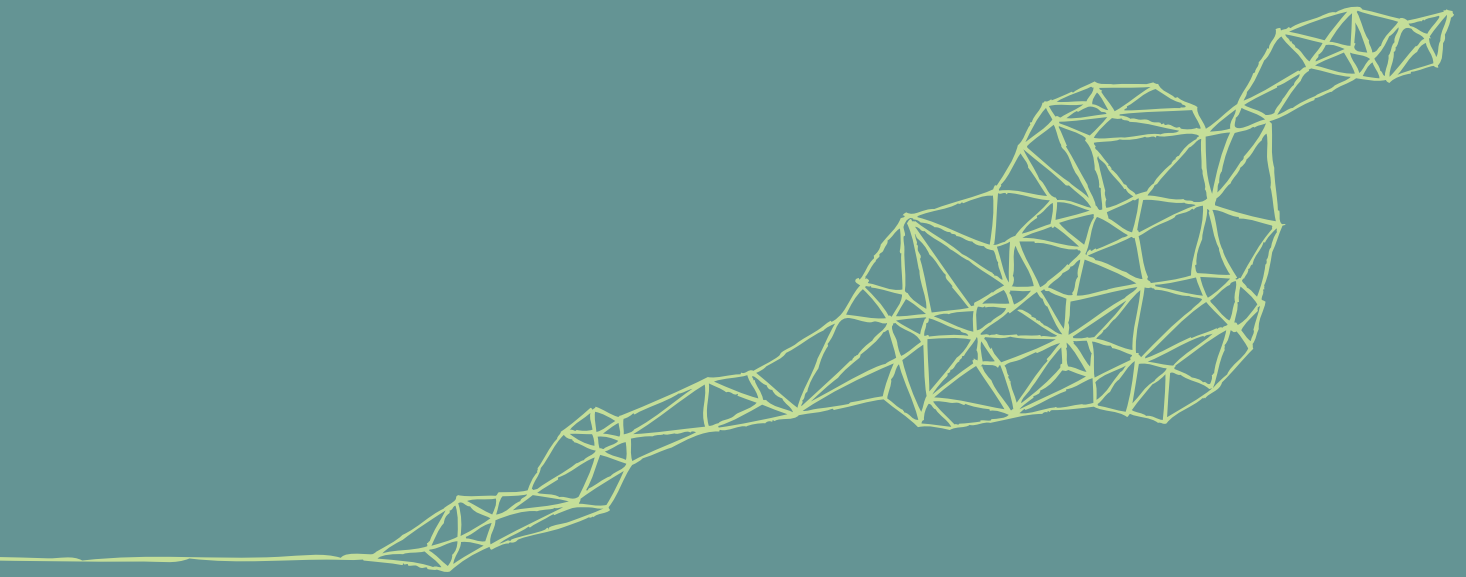


# German Teachers Learning about the Shoah in Israel

An Ethnography of Emotional Heritage  
and Contemporary Encounters

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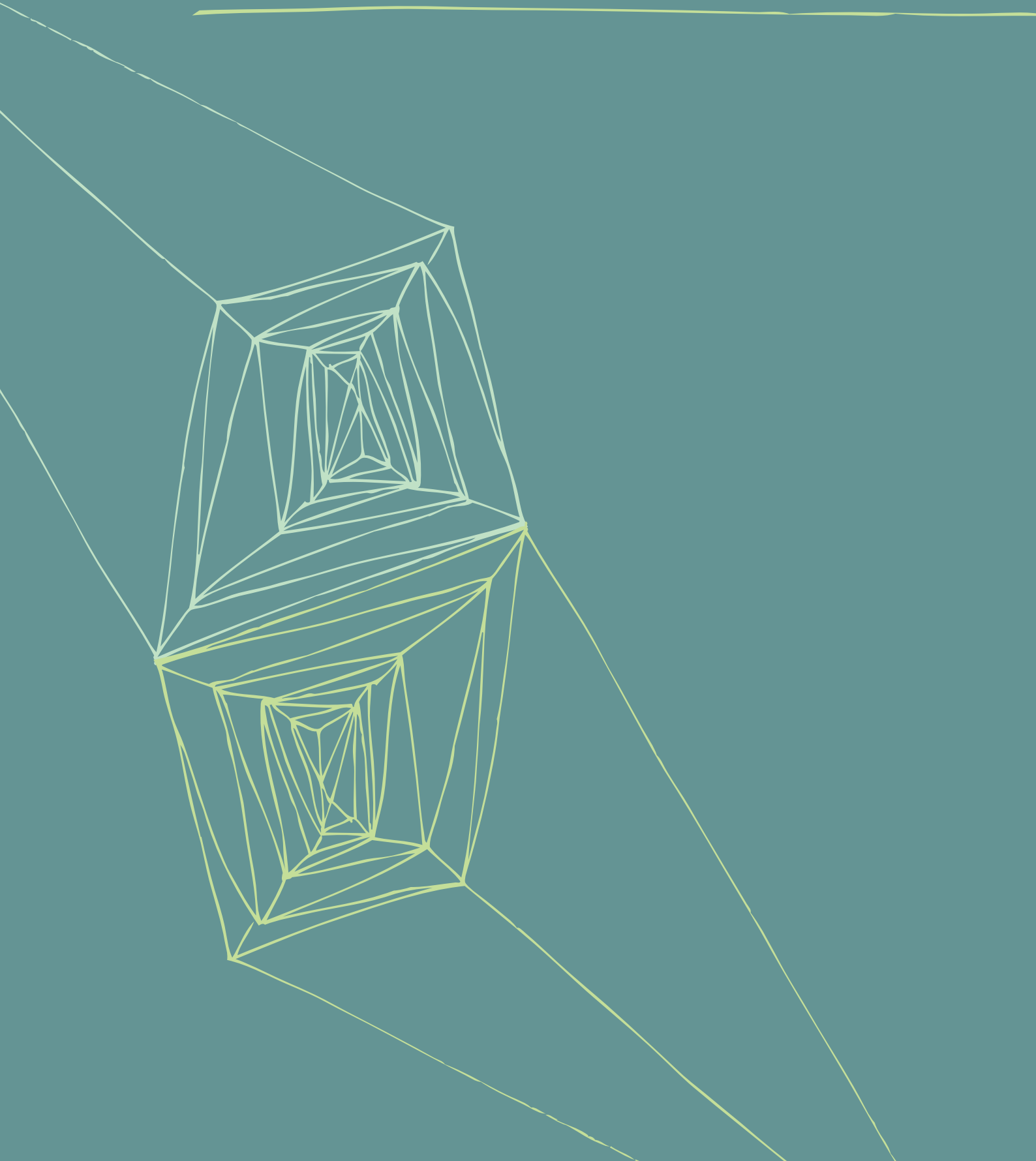
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# 1. Introduction

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*The word overwhelming is one of the themes of my life... I can't cope with it. It's something like speechlessness and helplessness. Nobody likes to say that, and maybe nobody likes to hear it as a teacher. And if it weren't so, if it didn't affect me, I couldn't teach it either.*

*(Walter, 50s)*

*These conversations in the schoolyard, these insults, this anti-Semitism... I can feel that it is increasing again in recent years. ...I think that young people also take over from their parents' conversations. That is simply unreflective, what is there, and you have to counteract it. And I hope to find answers. And I have already found answers on how to do it. ...That was one reason why I applied for this trip.*

*(Winfried, 60s)*

For educators, such as Walter and Winfried,<sup>1</sup> teaching the history of the Shoah to the next generation of German youth is fraught with challenges and ambiguities. From coping with overwhelming private emotions to counteracting anti-Semitism in the schoolyard, it is clear that history is not only confined to the past, but is also reflected in teacher practices in the present. In today's post-Shoah society, Germans are continuously performing memory through storytelling from one's childhood, nonverbal communication of past experiences in reactions and body language, the interpretation of historical events, jokes, hints, and comments, or meaningful silence, as in the case of Walter's self-proclaimed speechlessness. In this sense, history is a narrative linking individually and collectively significant past(s) with present experiences and visions of the future (Kölbl & Schrack, 2013). Emotional references and historical awareness of the Shoah are passed on

between the generations, and  
at the same time, continuously

1| All names used are pseudonyms.

revised in the institutional and discursive contexts of contemporary society. This affects teachers in two respects: their biographical socialization (Hoerning & Alheit, 1995) regarding practices of dealing with the Shoah and their communication of the Shoah to students in schools. While an emotional inheritance (see Lohl & Moré, 2014) and distorted narratives in the family memory (see Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008; Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020) stemming from the Shoah have been documented empirically in contemporary Germany, their impact has not yet been analyzed regarding teachers' goals for the mediation of the Shoah to the next generation, among whom Winfried identifies an increase in unreflective anti-Semitic insults. This research gap was the starting point and motivation to develop the present study.

Since the commencement of our ethnographic study in 2018, newspapers across the world have been riddled with headlines documenting a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Germany. With attacks at synagogues in Hamburg and Halle, and documented bullying and violence against Jewish children in schools, Germany is experiencing a marked increase in visible anti-Semitism three-quarters of a century after National Socialism. Bearing the responsibility for contemporary mediation of the Shoah, today's German teachers are forced to grapple with the presence of anti-Semitism in their schools, while simultaneously attempting to convey the present-day significance of the Shoah as impressively as possible to younger generations within a migration society.<sup>2</sup> Against this background of increasing anti-Semitism and New Right violence, each year hundreds of German

2 | The term "migration society" describes a society for which migration is constitutive of social reality. In contrast to notions which identify distinct "cultures" of migrants and natives, the concept of a migration society assumes that transformation processes emerge within the context of migration movements in multiple directions, which produce new, entangled collective identities and affiliations (Panagiotidis, 2019). The description of Germany as a "post-National Socialist migration society" (Messerschmidt, 2019) refers to a social context in which the history of National Socialism continues to impact the present as memory is appropriated in dynamic processes from different social positions and perspectives.

teachers travel to Israel to participate in a five to ten-day seminar at Yad Vashem's German Desk, where they encounter the Shoah from a Jewish perspective. What draws German teachers, like Walter and Winfried, to Israel to learn about the Shoah? How do generational orientations and emotional heritage influence how teachers experience this educational journey?

Can learning about the Shoah in Israel help teachers to combat anti-Semitism in German schools? And if so, how? The present research attempts to address these questions.

Professing an urgent need for high-quality research and cross-cultural exchanges on the “efforts of organizations dedicated to Holocaust education,” such as Yad Vashem, Stevick and Gross (2015) declare that “the gulf between what is occurring in the field and what is researched remains exceptionally large” (p. 4–5). Our ethnographic study, resulting from the collaboration of German and Israeli scholars and funded by the German Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (GIF), seeks to narrow this gulf. The cooperation between the Israeli and German researchers took advantage of the team’s interdisciplinary make-up, drawing on multiple perspectives, from primary and secondary pedagogy, adult education, social work, sociology, and anthropology. Relying on ethnographic data obtained through participant observation of seminar groups from four different federal states (three West German and one East German) and interviews with key actors (teacher-participants, German Desk staff, trip coordinators, and ministerial representatives), we investigate the role played by generational orientations in Holocaust education and how seminar participants link the history of the Shoah with their perception of the present. Focusing on German teachers of different generations, the research project provides an in-depth exploration of teacher motivations for learning about the Shoah in Israel, expectations of the various actors for the Yad Vashem seminars, and teacher evaluations of the Israel journey in retrospect.

We begin by describing the theoretical framework and the current state of research on Holocaust education (chapter 2), highlighting the manifold challenges facing German educators teaching in a post-Shoah migration society. Next, we detail the research setting and participants and outline the methodological approach and practicalities for the ethnographic study (chapter 3). Having set the stage with the theoretical and methodological perspectives, we then present the ethnographic material (chapter 4). While we follow a roughly chronological sequence, tracing teacher experiences before, during, and after the Israel journey, we choose to present the material thematically, permitting a focus on key actions



and processes within the research setting and the central analytic ideas which emerge. Reflecting on the conflicts, challenges, and emotions which arise from the material, we then summarize the findings (chapter 5) and finally consider the contribution of this study to the field of Holocaust education and an outlook toward further research (chapter 6).

The process of ethnography is one of co-production with participants, and is contingent on their trust, openness, and, not least, time. We express our heartfelt thanks to all participating teachers, coordinators, and ministry representatives. We are especially grateful to the staff at Yad Vashem's German Desk and others at the International School for Holocaust Education, who actively inspired us and assisted with accessing the field and the development, preparation, and implementation of the research. Without our participants' help, support, and involvement with our questions and discussions, the present study would simply not have been possible.

In the pages which follow we recount German teachers' narratives of emotional heritage and their contemporary encounters with Israelis and Palestinians. We will uncover teachers' hopes, challenges, and inspirations in Israel, document their concerns about contemporary anti-Semitism at home, and trace their interactions with Holocaust survivors, religious Jews, and Arab souvenir vendors. Through these ethnographic accounts we not only shed light on the processes through which German teachers learn about the Shoah in Israel, but open a window to examine the relevance of Holocaust education for new generations of students and their teachers in an age of increasing radicalization and extremism.

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# **2. Historical Context, Theoretical Framework, and Current Trends in German Shoah Education**

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## 2.1 Historical Developments in Shoah Education in Germany

Following World War II, Shoah education developed along two separate trajectories in divided Germany. In the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), denazification attempted to re-orient the education system toward democracy by emphasizing German history prior to 1933, yet remaining fairly silent on the mass murders of the Holocaust (Hazan & Voigtlander, 2012; Meseth, 2012). Many individuals educated in the 1950s and 1960s do not recall learning about National Socialism, as teachers were mostly reluctant to deal with this time period, even when it was included in the textbooks (Pagaard, 1995) and mandated in the curriculum following anti-Semitic incidents in the early 1960s (Auron, 2005). Re-education policies, which confronted pupils, as well as adults in further education, with the Holocaust in the four Allied occupation zones, focused primarily on the offenders, rather than on Jewish victims. Holocaust education was only slowly established following radical student movements in the late 1960s, which began to expose West Germany's silence (Anton, 2010). The airing of the *Holocaust* television series in the late 1970s also helped to open-up the topic for discussion in the public domain (Pingel, 2000), compared with the continued silence and repression of relatives' involvement that predominated communications within the family (Welzer, 2008). Between the 1960s and 1980s, discourse around the teaching of National Socialism focused on the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), with emphasis placed on German guilt, the responsibility to remember, and Adorno's (1966/1998a) demand to prevent another Auschwitz. By the late 1980s the practice of Holocaust education in West Germany had become increasingly professionalized and encouraged new pedagogical techniques, such as the inclusion of first-person accounts and student visits to memorial sites (Meseth, 2012).

In contrast to the developments in West Germany, the curriculum in East Germany (officially the German Democratic Republic, or GDR) maintained a doctrine of anti-fascism (Monteath, 2013), underscoring Soviet persecution and

heroizing communist resistance fighters as a means to strengthen the official ideology of the state (Hazan & Voigtlander, 2012). This ritualized memorialization of the crimes of National Socialism in East Germany marginalized Jewish and other non-communist victims and ignored the involvement of the German population as perpetrators, thereby preventing the development of a commemorative culture like that in West Germany (Radvan, 2015). These conflicting politics of memory and disparate approaches to history education blended together following German reunification in 1990. Compulsory Holocaust education was mandated throughout united Germany, as the transfer of Western Germany's memorial culture to East Germany (including textbooks, teacher training, and informal education at concentration camps, memorial sites, and museums) influenced a change in East German attitude toward the Nazi period (Auron, 2005; Hazan & Voigtlander, 2012). At the same time, reunification and revision of East Germany's Marxist-Leninist conception of history legitimized a universalist perspective. For example, post-unification history textbooks tend to discuss National Socialism within the wider framework of European Fascism, therefore permitting a comparative approach in which universal questions of minority rights and discrimination are raised (Dierkes, 2007). According to Meseth (2012), German reunification enabled the comparison of National Socialism with Stalinism and imposed a universalist orientation onto Western Germany's sense of particularistic responsibility. This reformulation positioned the Holocaust not as an event unique to German history, but as one case study of totalitarian rule, which could be used to teach universal lessons about tolerance and human rights.

As generations become further removed from the period of National Socialism, memories of the Shoah are no longer constructed based on lived experiences or on the oral histories of witnesses. Today's students formulate memories of the Shoah primarily based on representations encountered in schools, films, literature, the Internet, and social media. With loosening generational ties and the transformation of Germany into an immigrant country, such memories are becoming increasingly deterritorialized as the traditional boundaries between perpetrators and victims are obscured (Levy & Sznajder, 2006). Second, third, fourth, and fifth generation Germans wish to distance themselves from identification with the perpetrator generation while simultaneously facing rising

right-wing extremism rooted in Nazi ideology (Boschki, Reichmann & Schwendemann, 2015). Traditional approaches to teaching the Shoah in German schools often exclude those with migrant backgrounds who, despite possibly holding German citizenship, are not descendants of National Socialist perpetrators (Can, Georg & Hatlapa, 2013). Meanwhile, a perpetrator-victim reversal with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a growing phenomenon across Europe, as Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians are sometimes compared with those of Nazi Germany (Wetzell, 2013).

This complexity of the present German political and cultural landscape has raised several pedagogical questions concerning the teaching of National Socialism. New concerns are raised about how to make Holocaust education relevant for younger generations who no longer know family members who lived in the perpetrator society of the Nazi era (Thimm, Kößler & Ulrich, 2010) and may not find personal relevance in the topic (Mkayton, 2011), or share the same moral expectations as previous generations (Proske, 2012). Educators feel pressure to meet expectations that Holocaust education provides a transformative experience, and may fall short without a clear consensus on best practices (Stevick & Gross, 2015; Zülsdorf-Kersting, 2007). Another predominant discourse focuses on what Holocaust education should look like in a migration society (Georgi, 2003; Gryglewski, 2010; Köster, 2013). Yet additional debates center on whether to emphasize the uniqueness of the Shoah or its universality (Schweber, 2011), as well as if, and how, the history of National Socialism can be used to teach human rights and to combat contemporary anti-Semitism (Bauer, 2015; Eckmann, 2010a, 2015; Mihr, 2015).

## 2.2 Dissonance between German Official and Private Memorial Culture

As a post-National Socialist society (Messerschmidt, 2018) in which ideologies of National Socialism continue to shape and structure the present, Germany's national culture of remembrance can be characterized by a complex ambivalence in which a discrepancy exists between official and private cultures of remembrance (Welzer, 2008, 2011). A new collective self-confidence, in which Germans consider themselves to be memory "processing world champions," has arisen not despite, but because of Auschwitz, drawing a sense of moral superiority from the self-image of a successful remembrance culture (Mendel, Rhein & Uhlig, 2020; Meseth, 2005). The formation of a national identity-building culture of remembrance is closely linked to the establishment of memorials in former concentration camps, which represent a "material expression of a social self-description" (Haug, 2010, p. 33). These memorials serve not only a commemorative function, but a pedagogical one as well, complementing school history lessons on National Socialism as an integral part of the education system in reunified Germany. Considering that memorial sites are typically explored in groups and that processing occurs through interaction with one's peers, studies have highlighted the importance of peer education in this field (see Steinebach, 2007). Beyond the relationship between learners and a place, or that between pupils and teachers, the importance of educational processes within heterogeneous peer cohorts visiting memorial sites should not be underestimated.

On the one hand, the official German memorial culture is considered a success story, yet on the other hand, it causes increasing discomfort and criticism (Assmann, 2016). Despite international acclaim of Holocaust education in Germany and documented high levels of student interest in the topic (Rees, Papendick & Zick, 2019), some research evaluating pedagogical practices at memorial sites (see Österberg, 2017; Schellenberg, 2018) and schools (see Boschki, Reichmann & Schwendemann, 2015; Meseth & Proske, 2015; Simo,

Stevick & Gross, 2017) has questioned their effectiveness and identified significant gaps in student knowledge (forsa, 2017). Given that families can transmit different memories of National Socialism than those of the official memorial culture (Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008), formal instruction may not be able to overcome those private narratives within which students are socialized outside of the school (Zülsdorf-Kersting, 2007, 2008).

Once considered taboo, the conceptualization of the German nation as a victim has become increasingly widespread (Anton, 2010), as empathy is extended to German soldiers and civilians as victims of National Socialism. According to the representative Multidimensional Memory Monitor study (Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020), the majority of Germans understand the term “victim” to apply to German society, while 35.8% of Germans contend that there were victims of National Socialism among their

relatives. Self-victimization transmitted via intergenerational narratives occurs alongside a re-interpretation of family histories.

Reflecting routines of “empty speech” (vague references to events during the Nazi era) and cumulative heroization in intergenerational conversations, younger generations separate older relatives from the crimes by portraying them as either uninvolved or resistant to National Socialism (Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008). Almost one-third of Germans believe that their relatives explicitly resisted National Socialism by helping persecuted populations (Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020), indicating a strong desire to distinguish parents and grandparents from Nazis. Beyond not wanting to face troublesome family biographies, many younger Germans exhibit Holocaust fatigue (Ahlheim & Heger, 2002), asserting that they have heard enough about the Shoah and “feel able to escape history by rejecting any confrontation with it” (Heyl, 1996, p. 281). Today, over one-quarter of interviewed German adults agree it is time to draw a final line (“Schlussstrich”) under German guilt instead of continuing to reflect on the past (Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020).

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## 2.3 Anti-Semitism in post-Shoah Germany

As younger generations distance themselves from the perpetrator generation, today's educators also face the challenge of teaching the lessons of National Socialism within a changing social climate characterized by new dynamics of anti-Semitism. Despite Germany's memorial culture and official policies prohibiting anti-Semitism, it has continued to have a latent effect in the democratic society, where it is normalized in everyday social structures (Adorno, 1962/1997; Bernstein, 2020) as linguistic distinctions between "the Germans" and "the Jews" implicitly classify Jews as non-German (Enzenbach, 2012; Klarzyk, 2020). The official taboo on anti-Semitism since the Shoah, along with a desire to maintain an untarnished German identity within a post-nationalistic society, promotes non-perception of anti-Semitism among non-Jewish Germans. As a result, non-Jewish Germans may fail to categorize modern, seemingly harmless, anti-Semitic attacks as legitimate acts of anti-Semitism given the brutality of the Shoah as a reference point (Bernstein, 2020; Chernivsky, 2017; Messerschmidt, 2018). Yet the effects of mounting anti-Semitism are palpable for German Jewish communities, where entrance to synagogues and Jewish schools requires strict security screenings, and letters from Jewish organizations are sent out in unlabeled envelopes (Steinke, 2020). Despite such security measures, some Jewish communities claim they do not feel adequately protected. Anticipating possible anti-Semitic threats, Jews contemplate whether it is safe to wear religious symbols on the street, and parents and students fear mentioning Jewish family backgrounds at public schools (Bernstein, 2020; Chernivsky, Lorenz & Schweitzer, 2020).

While classical forms of anti-Semitism are declining, secondary anti-Semitism (e.g., refusing Holocaust remembrance, advancing conspiracy theories, claiming Jews exploit the memory of the Holocaust, stating that Jews have too much economic power) continues to be prevalent, and Israel-related anti-Semitism is on the rise (Berek, 2018). Anti-Semitism is increasingly present within the youth



culture, music, and Internet activity of the extreme right-wing (Boschki, Reichmann & Schwendemann, 2015), whose non-migrant German supporters are the predominant perpetrators of anti-Semitic incidents (Berek, 2018) despite popular discourses framing anti-Semitism as a solely “Muslim” or “refugee” problem (Chernivsky, 2017; Messerschmidt, 2018). Although high degrees of openly expressed anti-Semitism have been documented among some German Muslims with a migration background (e.g., Jikeli, 2013, 2015), there remains no conclusive evidence that the rise in anti-Semitism is caused by recent immigrations (Berek, 2018). Given the latent influence of National Socialism and growing New Right movements, teachers often encounter anti-Semitism in the classroom and claim that overcoming prejudices and stereotypes learned at home is a major challenge of Holocaust education (Gross, 2012; Radvan, 2010). Anti-Semitism is experienced by students and teachers in German schools of all types, and ranges from anti-Semitic remarks in student chats and teacher WhatsApp groups, anti-Semitic slurs and drawings, Holocaust jokes, and even physical violence against Jewish students. Such anti-Semitic incidents are perceived differently by Jewish families and non-Jewish teachers, who are often overwhelmed and ill-prepared to respond effectively. Even though teachers can clearly name and describe anti-Semitic incidents, recent qualitative research demonstrates that teachers often trivialize such episodes as typical of adolescence or specific groups of students (Bernstein, 2020; Chernivsky & Lorenz, 2020).

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## 2.4 Shoah Education in a Migration Society

Although anti-Semitism remains a continuous threat in today's Germany, xenophobia, racism, and violent crimes targeted at Muslims and refugees are actually more prevalent (Berek, 2018). Marginalization of Muslims has become more common since 9/11, while rising immigration and government naturalization campaigns promoting nationhood based on citizenship, rather than German ethnicity, have encouraged a rediscovery of traditional ethnic nationalism (Götz, 2016). In light of changing demographics, renationalization, and the emergence of anti-Islamic movements, new concerns have been raised about how to teach the Holocaust in a migration society. Comparisons based on the varied cultural experiences found in diverse classrooms have the potential to enhance learning about the subject (Stevick, 2017), yet may also incite conflicts between Germans positioned in the dominant society and those of migrant backgrounds (Fechler, 2000).

In recent years a pairing of Holocaust and multicultural education has taken place, in which educators view teaching the history of National Socialism as a means to address modern issues of multiculturalism and xenophobia (Ortloff, 2015). In contemporary Germany, an influx of immigrants from Arab and/or Muslim countries has complicated the conception of a unified German identity based on the collective memory of the Holocaust (Rothberg & Yildiz, 2011). At the same time Holocaust education is connected with lessons in diversity, tolerance, and non-violence, such a multicultural education paradoxically functions to ostracize migrant minorities. Classified as the new "Other," Muslim Germans tend to be excluded from national belonging, as teachers emphasize guilt, shame, and responsibility as uniquely German burdens to which non-ethnic Germans could not conceivably relate (Ortloff, 2015; Özyürek, 2018). Despite an increasingly heterogeneous population, including students with diverse needs and socio-historical perspectives, the Holocaust tends to be taught primarily from the dominant non-migration German perspective (Vitale & Clothey, 2019).

Contrary to popular belief, youth of Arab-Palestinian or Turkish backgrounds do not necessarily demonstrate less interest in learning about the Holocaust (Gryglewski, 2013). However, the ways in which such migrant students interact with the memory of the Holocaust may not be those which are deemed appropriate by the ethnic German majority (Stender, Follert & Özdoğan, 2010). For migrant youth with origins in Arab and/or Muslim countries where alternative Holocaust narratives and hostile attitudes toward Jews (grounded in the Palestinian struggle against Israel) may be propagated by the media, distorted views of the Holocaust may be believed in opposition to the official discourses transmitted in schools. Muslim minorities have frequently compared the evils of the Nazi era to other tragic incidences of suffering — such as the plight of the Palestinians or the Iraq War — in ways which diminish the Holocaust’s uniqueness according to the official narrative (Jikeli, 2013). Not only are migrants accused of lacking the capacity for understanding the past, but they are criticized for not appreciating present-day Germany as different from National Socialist Germany of the 1930s. When immigrants have expressed fear that Holocaust-like persecution could happen to them, or envy that anti-Semitism is addressed but not Islamophobia, they are dismissed as engaging in “victim competition” and judged to be “emotionally and cognitively deficient and morally unfit to be legitimate members of German society” (Özyürek, 2018, p. 469). While immigrants approach German national history and the legacies of the Shoah in relation to their own migrant subjectivities (Rothberg, 2009; Rothberg & Yildiz, 2011), most Holocaust education programs do not provide space for the recognition of those alternative reactions present within a migration society (Özyürek, 2018).

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## 2.5 Emotions and Shoah Pedagogy

The management of emotions in the classroom poses a double challenge for educators who teach about the Shoah in Germany. First, teachers are responsible for educating youth about the previous generations' "moral and political failure" (Gerson, 2013, p. 142) — a failure with which teachers are often more emotionally connected than their students. Emotions are directly tied-up with teacher family biographies, as the history of National Socialism being taught is often that of their own parents and grandparents (Nägel & Kahle, 2018). Second, teachers face socially standardized expectations that lessons on the Holocaust elicit specific student emotions, including "consternation, compassion, empathy, or grief" (Brauer, 2019, p. 241), as well as mediate indefinite feelings of guilt (Messerschmidt, 2018). The linkage of the Shoah in educational settings to contemporary issues, such as right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism, further charges Holocaust education with strong emotional expectations (Gryglewski, 2018). Drawing on Ahmed's (2004) model of emotions as social practice, Krieg (2015) conceptualizes the Holocaust as a "sticky" affective site, where emotions can either engender meaningful change in perspective, or present as obstacles to learning. Krieg distinguishes between emotions causing apathy, such as overwhelming sadness and guilt, and those which create empathy.

Brauer (2016) identifies an "empathy hype" in recent German historical pedagogical discourse, in which empathy is perceived as the most successful way to teach history and to educate about values and morality. This new "empathy hype" follows decades in which Germans were socialized into a lack of empathetic consideration for Jewish perspectives on the Shoah. According to Gryglewski (2018), German teaching about the Shoah has tended to rely on documents from the perpetrator perspective, thereby simultaneously normalizing the adoption of an unreflected perpetrator viewpoint alongside an over-identification with the victims. While schoolchildren in Germany are often asked to identify with the victims, Urban (2008) asserts that it is not possible for students to identify with someone who died in a camp, and that the goal of Shoah education should be the development of empathy rather than identification.

Outside of the classroom, Holocaust memorials and museums are now also expected to build empathy within visitors by creating a specific aura (Heyl, 2013; Pampel, 2007) or themed environment (Oren & Shani, 2012), and by providing an emotional confrontation with history through which such institutions gain social legitimacy (Assmann & Brauer, 2011; Brauer, 2016).

Despite the “empathy hype,” there is considerable debate about exactly what types of empathy are appropriate to develop and for what ends. Criticizing those who aim to stimulate emotional (or affective) empathy and identification among learners, McKayton (2011) contends that it is unproductive to encourage students to feel too close to the suffering of Shoah victims. Explaining the pedagogical concept of Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust studies, McKayton advocates for a pedagogy which appeals to cognitive empathy — the ability to imagine and understand the experiences of another. However, as Özyürek (2018) points out, how the experiences of others are imagined depends on the empathizer’s positionality. Addressing criticism directed toward Muslim minorities for not showing acceptable forms of empathy toward Jewish Holocaust victims, Özyürek draws on Husserl’s intersubjective understanding of empathy using an analogy of swapping shoes: “An ethnic German and a racialized minority German wearing differently positioned shoes will not feel the same way when they put themselves in the shoes of Jewish Holocaust victims before eventually returning to their own shoes” (pp. 470–471). In other words, legitimate empathetic connections can be experienced in multiple ways. Emphasizing the return to one’s own shoes, Brauer (2016) claims that empathy “not only means that one put oneself in the other’s shoes, but also that one returns to one’s own in order to recognize the astonishing difference between the two positions” (pp. 40–41). From this perspective, empathetic learning is about students recognizing and reflecting on their own reactions rather than having particular emotions forced upon them as a goal of historical pedagogy.

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## 2.6 Further Education for German Teachers on the Shoah

The tensions around emotional involvement in the topic of the Holocaust create special challenges for teacher training. Prospective history teachers, who are often afraid to teach the topic, do not necessarily obtain basic knowledge on the Shoah in their university courses and can avoid contact with the topic completely in some universities (Nägel & Kahle, 2018) given that course syllabi typically reflect a professor's individual expertise. Curriculum guidelines for Holocaust education in Germany — which vary from one federal state to another due to the decentralized political and administrative responsibility for education policy — are often relatively vague, placing a weighty responsibility on teachers to plan lessons and select instructional methods (Bilewicz, Witkowska, Stubig, Beneda & Imhoff, 2017). Consequently, there is an imperative need for increased levels of professional development and teacher support, especially for teachers of subjects other than history and for those working in primary schools, vocational schools, and special education (Heyl, 2001).

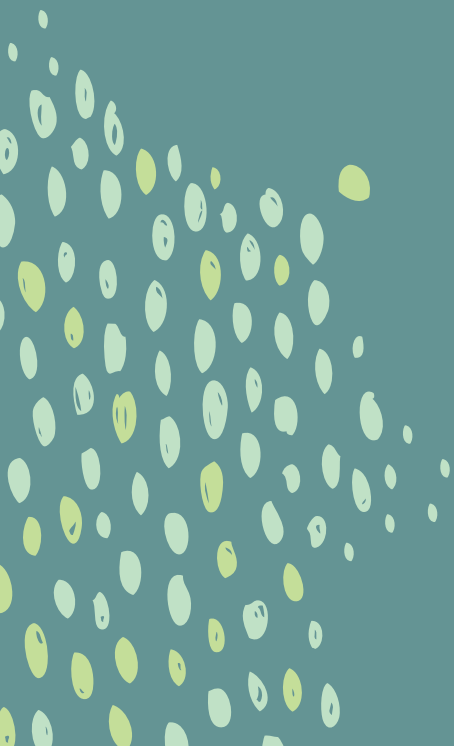
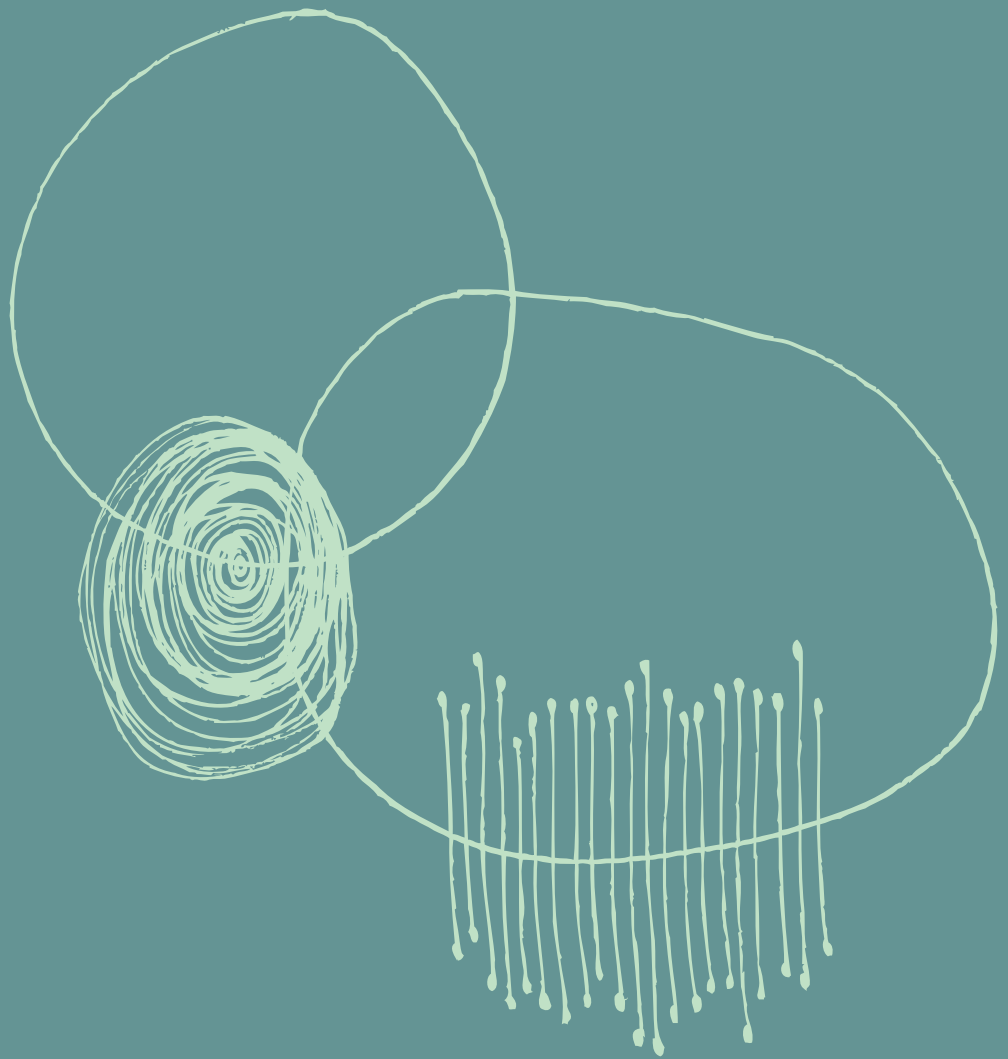
Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies provides one such opportunity for teacher professional development. Despite its geographical distance from primary sites in Europe, Yad Vashem has been perceived by participants in its teacher-training seminars as an authentic site for learning about the Shoah on so-called dark pilgrimages (Cohen, 2011). In fact, some European teachers have even described Yad Vashem as more impressive than the "authentic places" in Europe (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010). Drawing on anthropologist Victor Turner's classic theory, we understand pilgrimage as an individual's ritual and symbol-laden journey from home to a distant "center out there" in search of authentic experiences which may stimulate an "inward transformation of spirit or personality" (1973, p. 214). Contemporary scholars have extended Turner's religious model to secular pilgrimages (see Margry, 2008), describing Elvis Presley's Graceland (Doss, 2008), Washington

D.C.'s Vietnam War Memorial (Dubisch, 2008), and even Star Trek conventions (Porter, 2004) as sacred centers. Likewise, studies of Jewish dark tourism to Holocaust sites in Europe (e.g., Feldman, 2008; Kugelmass, 1994) confirm that while such pilgrimages may ultimately be secular in nature, the experience is no less transformative or sacred for those pilgrims who make the journey and engage with its symbols and rituals.

In contrast to *in situ* Holocaust sites in Europe marking the locations where atrocities actually took place, Yad Vashem functions as an *in populo* memorial site, located “at a population and spiritual center of the people to whom a tragedy befell” (Cohen, 2011, p. 193). Given the *in populo* nature of the site, Cohen (2011) found that visiting European teachers “perceived the meetings with Israelis and interactions with Israeli society as an integral part of learning about the Shoah” (p. 202). However, based on their research conducted in seminars held at Yad Vashem in the early 1990s, Lozowick and Millen (1996) found that tensions arose when Germans and Israelis attempted to engage in dialogue due to their differing conceptions of Shoah memory. The authors identified four sources of conflict: (1) German participants often sought absolution of guilt, while the Israeli view emphasized responsibility; (2) German participants exhibited emotional detachment, while seeing Israelis as attempting emotional manipulation; (3) German participants focused on their own history, while the Israeli view focused on Jewish victimization; and (4) German participants wanted to teach lessons from the Shoah for the present, while Israelis were motivated by commemoration. A quarter of a century later, the current research seeks to understand what has shaped new generations of German teachers’ orientations vis-à-vis the history of National Socialism and how this leads to specific practices as they encounter the Shoah from a Jewish perspective at Yad Vashem.

# 3. Methodology

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## 3.1 Research Interest

The interest of our study concerns the question of generational change in the encounter with the Shoah, as well as its mediation between generations in German schools. This interest is directed towards the practices, interpretations, and orientations of German teachers during professional development seminars held at Yad Vashem, as well as their expectations and reflections before and after their journey to Israel. We approach the praxeological question of teachers' engagement with the Shoah against the background of those research gaps outlined in the literature review, including questions about the intergenerational transmission of emotions, the meaning of empathic learning, the transferral of Holocaust memory to youth within a migration society, and the relevance of the Shoah for addressing current anti-Semitism and racism in Germany. The seminars for German teachers organized by Yad Vashem's German Desk are a particularly rich setting for investigating these tension fields, as conflicts, challenges, and questions regarding the memory of the Shoah and Holocaust education in today's Germany come to a head over the course of a five to ten-day sojourn in Israel. Through an in-depth study of the many actors involved in the Yad Vashem seminars (teacher-participants, trip coordinators, German Desk staff, and education ministry representatives), we aim to understand both how and why German teachers, who face a myriad of challenges in teaching the Holocaust to the next generation, learn about the Shoah on government-sponsored trips to Israel. Our research addresses three primary questions:

1. How do German teachers learn about the Shoah from a Jewish perspective in a Holocaust education setting in Israel?
2. What role do generational orientations play in Holocaust education, and how do seminar participants link the history of the Shoah with their perception of the present?
3. What motivates teachers to learn about the Shoah in Israel, what expectations do various actors have for the seminars, and how is the Israel journey evaluated in retrospect?

## 3.2 Research Field and Participants

In the past two decades, all sixteen German federal states<sup>3</sup> have signed cooperation contracts with Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies to provide teacher professional development. Every year (or every other year, in some cases) each federal state's education ministry sends groups of approximately twenty teachers to Israel to participate in a five to ten-day seminar at Yad Vashem's German Desk, where they encounter the Shoah from a Jewish perspective. The teacher training seminars in Israel are supported by various Holocaust-related organizations, while the German education ministries subsidize the travel expenses of the teachers. In this ethnographic study, we engaged in participant observation with four different teacher groups (three groups from West Germany and one group from East Germany),<sup>4</sup> accompanying them during preparatory meetings, the Israel journey itself, and follow-up workshops. Participant observation was complemented with 70 interviews with key actors, including Yad Vashem's German Desk staff, trip coordinators, ministerial representatives, and the teacher-participants.

The 88 German teacher-participants in our study ranged in age from 27 to 61,

and worked in a variety of school types, including primary schools, middle schools, high schools, technical colleges, and schools for children with learning disabilities. Teachers born in the 1960s and 1970s (currently in their 40s and 50s) comprised the most frequent age cohort represented in the research (see Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix for a detailed breakdown of teacher-participants). Groups comprised teachers of multiple subject areas, including history,

3 | Five of the 16 federal states are so-called "new states," having emerged from the former GDR following German reunification in 1990. According to Germany's decentralized education federalism, each federal state has its own ministry of education or cultural affairs, where decisions regarding teacher training are made on a federal state-specific basis.

4 | For logistical reasons, we could accompany groups from three West German federal states and one East German federal state in our research. Our ethnographic data reveal many similarities between all German teacher groups, as well as marked differences between East and West German teachers with regard to specific phenomena. In retrospect, our research team reflected that the study would have been enriched had we been able to accompany two East German groups.

civics, languages, literature, art, ethics, economics, sports, pedagogy, and chemistry, as well as primary school teachers who teach multiple subjects. One group also included school psychologists, and two groups included teacher-trainers employed by the ministries of education. Given that more female than male teachers tend to apply for the seminars, the majority of the teacher-participants in each group are female, except for one group, whose participants were intentionally selected according to gender quotas. Five of the teacher-participants have a migration background, meaning that they, or at least one of their parents, were born in a country other than Germany.

In German schools, teacher-participants work to transfer knowledge and emotions to their students, yet in the Yad Vashem seminar the teachers suddenly find themselves in the receiving position. In both roles, dealing with the Holocaust activates particular dispositions toward the Shoah and National Socialism affiliated with specific memory communities. Teachers typically exhibit biographical and social affiliations either with “perpetrator collectives” (Eckmann, 2010b, p. 65), or with those individuals who were not persecuted during the Shoah. As we will detail in the ethnographic findings, these affiliations are revealed through historical, biographical, and emotional associations made by participants over the course of the Yad Vashem seminars.

**In German schools, teacher-participants work to transfer knowledge and emotions to their students, yet in the Yad Vashem seminar the teachers suddenly find themselves in the receiving position. In both roles, dealing with the Holocaust activates particular dispositions toward the Shoah and National Socialism affiliated with specific memory communities.**

### 3.3 A Focused Ethnographic Approach

The research questions, focused on orientations and practices performed in a specific education setting in Israel, lend themselves to a holistic ethnographic approach following a methodological frame of grounded and practice theories (Glaser & Strauss, 2006/1967; Reckwitz, 2003). Based on the assumption that individuals perform specific social practices in different contexts, an ethnographic approach aims to describe and understand repeating social practices, while uncovering the attitudes, perspectives, and motivations of key actors (Rosenthal, 2015). Ethnography is a personal, interactive, and dialogical process, in which researchers engage in long-term relationships with participants and somatically experience the logic, tensions, and power relations of the field. Ethnography also emphasizes the importance of writing as a research process, including taking field notes, writing protocols, and interpreting material in theoretical memos as the basis for analysis, reconstruction, and description of practices (Hirschauer, 2001). Compared with classical ethnography, in which field stays typically last at least one full year, our study can be described as a “focused ethnography” (Knoblauch, 2005) including four intensive field stays (5–10 days) with the teacher groups during seminars in Israel. Participant observation was carried out during workshops of the Yad Vashem seminar, tours throughout Israel and the West Bank, bus rides, breaks, meals in hotels and restaurants, leisure time, and evening activities. In addition, we observed preparatory meetings for all four teacher groups and post-seminar meetings for two groups. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, follow-up workshops were not held for the other two groups. Instead, individual interviews (either in person or via telephone or video call) were conducted with nine teachers from these groups.

Interviews and group discussions were used to supplement participant observation throughout the study, allowing for the contextualization of observation situations and the validation of impressions (Rosenthal, 2015). As outlined in the literature review, generations post-National Socialism not only exhibit remnants of perpetrator biographies, but have also been influenced by the intergenerational transmission of collectively shaped practices of silence,

omissions, defense, and self-victimization (see Chernivsky, 2017; Moré, 2014; Völter & Rosenthal, 1999). At the same time, German memorial culture is highly normative and routinized. Against this background, we selected interview methods not aimed to elicit explicit arguments and opinions, but to stimulate a biographical narrative flow (individual narrative interviews) and unstructured, open exchange (group discussions) among the German teacher participants.

Throughout the course of the Yad Vashem seminars, short interviews (approximately 15 to 40 minutes in duration) were conducted with around half of all teacher-participants (49 teachers). Teachers were asked about their personal biographies, memories of encounters with the topic of the Holocaust in their youth, preparation for teaching the Shoah in university training, current experiences in German schools, and thoughts, concerns, and impressions regarding the Yad Vashem seminar and Israel journey. These biographical interviews allowed us to construct a portrait of today's generation of teachers with regard to their relationship with the Shoah and its mediation. Group discussions were held during the preparatory and follow-up meetings in Germany (with one group discussion held the first evening in Israel prior to the start of the seminar, and individual interviews replacing post-seminar discussions in two groups due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as mentioned above). Teachers were asked about their expectations of the Israel trip in the pre-seminar group discussions, and about their reflections of the experience after their return to the classroom in the post-seminar discussions (and interviews). The purpose of the group discussions was to stimulate an open exchange among teachers in a familiar storytelling community with professional peers. The aim was to create a communication space, or a narrative community, in which collective patterns of interpretations, as well as contradictory perspectives, could be negotiated (see Flick, 2010).

Five narrative interviews were held with trip coordinators and representatives of federal ministries of cultural affairs and education to understand these actors' ideas and goals concerning the seminars. Five additional narrative interviews and two short ethnographic interviews were conducted with staff members of Yad Vashem's German Desk, providing insight into institutional objectives and

enabling a reconstruction of staff perspectives regarding the challenges of teaching the Shoah to German teacher groups (see Tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix for a breakdown of ministry representatives and German Desk staff). The table below summarizes all the empirical data collected in the study:

Data material	Detailed description
Participant observation, field notes, and protocols about four groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 teacher groups during a 5–10 day stay in Israel.</li> <li>• 4 preparatory meetings in Germany</li> <li>• 2 post-seminar meetings in Germany</li> </ul>
Group discussions (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 group discussions with teachers before the start of the seminar.</li> <li>• 2 group discussions with teachers after the seminar.</li> </ul>
Interviews (70)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 49 interviews with teachers during the seminar</li> <li>• 9 interviews with teachers post-seminar</li> <li>• 3 interviews with trip coordinators</li> <li>• 2 interviews with education ministry representatives</li> <li>• 7 interviews with German Desk staff</li> </ul>

Data analysis was carried out through open and focused coding and the writing of theoretical memos adopted from grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), supplemented by a narrative analysis of interviews (Rosenthal, 2015). Key categories about phenomena from the material and a comprehensive cross-material coding system were developed. The codes around each observed phenomenon permitted the reconstruction of social practices in various seminar contexts, including Yad Vashem workshops and touristic activities. These categories and connected memos led to the

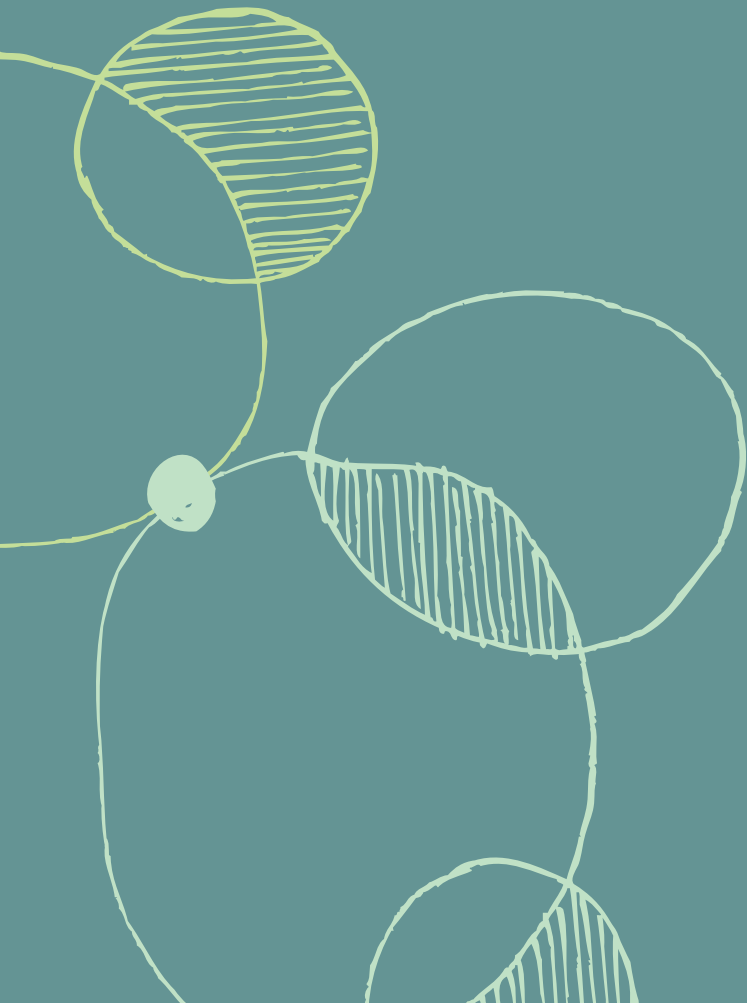
identification of relevant practices and orientations detailed in the subsequent chapters. Adopting a praxeological perspective, we focus less on the intentions of individual actors and more on the reconstruction, description, and analysis of observable social practices.

Given a praxeological perspective, we understand memory as a social practice which can be performed, (re)produced, confirmed, discussed, and felt. Our research questions, focusing on how German teachers learn about the Shoah from Jewish perspectives at an Israeli memorial site, and how they link events from the past to their perception of the present, point to this concept of memory as an ongoing interactive practice (Rosenthal, 2010) linked to identity, spaces, places, and time (Drozdewski & Birdsall, 2019). Memory practices, activated in specific social contexts, are tied to rules of how to remember that are associated with particular memory communities (Drozdewski & Birdsall, 2019; Eckmann, 2010b; Rosenthal, 2010). As the German teacher-participants (and researchers) visiting the Yad Vashem campus engage with the museum and the seminar, they make sense of the memorial site and create meaning through thoughts, feelings, and affects shaped by emotional heritage. Consequently, an embodied ethnographic approach enables the consideration of these spatial, material, and social dimensions of doing memory, whereby individuals deal with pasts not directly their own, their intergenerational reverberations, and the interactive process through which pasts are given collective and subjective meaning(s) in the present.

**Given a praxeological perspective, we understand memory as a social practice which can be performed, (re)produced, confirmed, discussed, and felt.**

# 4. German Teachers' Emotional Heritage and Contemporary Encounters in Israel

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## 4.1 The Contemporary Challenges of Shoah Education

Although there have been claims of “Holocaust fatigue” among younger Germans (e.g., Ahlheim & Heger, 2002), teachers from different groups contended it is a “myth” that the Holocaust is a topic which is taught relentlessly. In fact, teachers frequently expressed surprise that their students maintained a strong interest in learning about the topic. In the words of Lydia (30s)<sup>5</sup> during a group discussion before the seminar:

*My students are totally interested in the topic, that it has somehow experienced a renaissance. And that is actually an opportunity that one could take up, or actually have to think about what we can do with it today, make out of it, even in times of digitization.*

Yet this opportunity to tap into renewed student interest is thwarted by multiple challenges associated with teaching the Shoah in contemporary Germany. Over the course of the Yad Vashem seminars, teachers expressed frustration regarding the lack of time allotted to the Shoah in the curriculum, the inadequate supply of teaching materials, and the generational gap between students and teachers.


According to Till (50s), there is “competition” within the history curriculum, as didactical questions are raised over which topics deserve focus in the classroom. As a result of an ever-increasing number of topics which must be covered in

history lessons, the era of National Socialism is often dealt with only briefly in history courses, or encountered fragmentarily by students in different subjects, such as German language, art, religion, or ethics.<sup>6</sup> Participants in the Yad Vashem

5 | The age range of each participant is indicated after their first appearance in the report. See Table 2 in the Appendix for a detailed breakdown of teacher pseudonyms and age ranges organized by group.

6 | In German schools, ethics is the secular subject which students can choose in lieu of Protestant or Catholic religious classes.

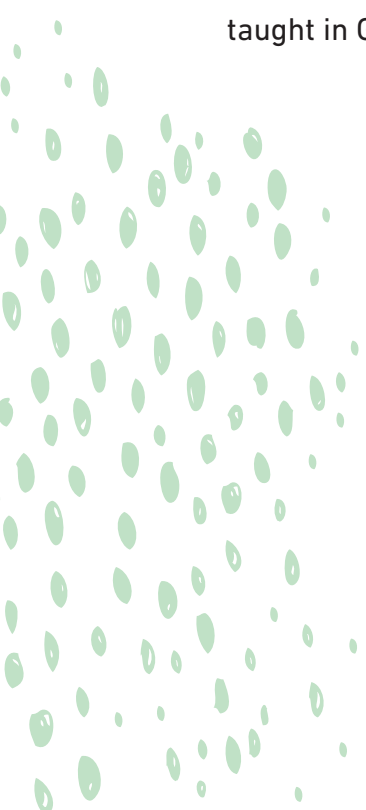
seminars, such as Berta (50s), often distinguished themselves from their colleagues back home who do not prioritize teaching of the Shoah:



*We are a very select group here, not normal teachers. Many colleagues are completely different and don't take the topic seriously. I have a colleague, a history teacher, who says at the end of the school year, "Well, now I have two hours left for National Socialism."*

As a self-selected group, those teachers who choose to travel to Yad Vashem set themselves apart from typical German teachers who are less committed to learning and teaching about the Shoah.

Coupled with the lack of teaching time, a shortage of quality prepared curricular materials further exacerbates the challenge of teaching the Shoah for overwhelmed German teachers. Before the start of the seminar, Werner (50s) expressed that a paucity of suitable material explains why the Shoah is not being taught in Germany:




*I want to know from professionals what to choose from the plethora of possible topics on the Holocaust. That is a real niche in the market. If Yad Vashem were able to pack it into bite-sized pieces. If there were well-prepared materials, it would be taught. Reduced to the essentials. Because it is not taught. The Holocaust is not taught in Germany. ...And the reality of teaching has to be taken into account. Yad Vashem could take the burden off the teachers, if teachers could withdraw to the work of a renowned institution, then it would also be taught. In a nutshell, Holocaust education in Germany is under the heading: a lot of opinion, little knowledge. It is a myth when it is said that the students know so much and are oversaturated.*

Beyond critiquing the current state of Holocaust education in Germany, Werner's remarks reveal his motivation for embarking on the Yad Vashem pilgrimage:

a quest for the elusive “well-prepared materials” by “professionals.” Till echoed this sentiment, referring to the Yad Vashem database as “a treasure trove.” Yet he cautioned that the very vastness of the database “could be a deterrent,” explaining, “It is unrealistic for a teacher to sit down and look for things. You need someone to pre-select the best stuff.” German teachers, such as Werner and Till, expect to return from Yad Vashem — likened to a far-off repository of magic elixirs — with the hand-selected cure-all curriculum for Germany’s Holocaust education woes.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle teachers face is emotionally reaching students and conveying the relevance of the Shoah for today’s generation. The search for ways to reach students and cultivate empathy is a typical motivation for German teachers’ visits to Yad Vashem. During the introduction round of the seminar, Gaby (50s) confessed, “I’m at Yad Vashem because I have the feeling that I can no longer reach my students. I am moved by the question of how we can achieve it.” Similarly, Max (30s) asked, “How can one convey it empathically in everyday life? In history lessons, the focus is always on imparting knowledge about how the NSDAP<sup>7</sup> was set up. But an empathic attitude, how can that be conveyed?” Teachers’ aim to convey empathy can be understood against the background of their own emotional heritage and patterns of intergenerational narratives, as well as a highly routinized German memorial culture, which lead to expectations of advancing empathy among students. Some teachers, such as Moritz, (40s) mentioned his personal disappointment when students do not react as expected:



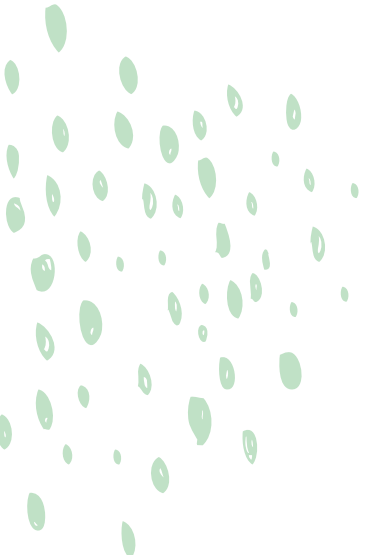
*It’s scary because there are actually all reactions to it. ...We had a contemporary witness over ninety, she lost the whole family. She talked to the students for an hour and a half and I sat in the back and watched the students talking and talking. They were playing around and laughing. I think these students react that way because that’s how it was conveyed to them.*

7 | National Socialist German Workers’ (Nazi) Party

Strikingly, Moritz attributes the students’ behavior during the

survivor encounter to a failure in the intergenerational transmission of emotion (see section 4.4 for more on teachers' biographies and emotional heritage).

This tendency for teachers to expect their students to relate emotionally to the Holocaust in the same ways that they do is identified by Leah (German Desk) as a phenomenon unique to German groups. When interviewed, Leah noted that teachers often have "a wish for this current generation of students that the Holocaust has exactly the same meaning for them as it does for the generation of those who are teachers today." Given that many teachers grew up within a "culture of shame" from which contemporary students are considerably removed, the generational disconnect serves as a significant obstacle, as described by Niklas (40s):




*That is actually the great educational challenge, that you don't always process it with such a culture of shame as that of our generation. ...We have to approach it differently. ...The youngsters are now in the fifth, sixth generation, so far removed from it that they no longer have grandpas and grandmas from where they can get something about it first hand, but only through history books and all the right or wrong representations in the environment.*

Despite the skewed biographical narratives about the Shoah which can be present in German families (Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008), grandparents are perceived as important sources of information, without which it is difficult for the younger generation to connect on an emotional level. Consequently, teachers are acutely aware of the need to adopt a fresh approach and hope to touch the students emotionally by breaking out of their teaching routines, which typically consist of "going through the textbook pages," as Gabriel (50s) put it. Reiner (50s) explained, "In this context one should succeed to break out of this routine and not just hit the intellect, but somehow also the heart. ...I find that is not an easy task and every enrichment experience there can just help." Teachers make the journey to Yad Vashem not only on the hunt for a panacea curriculum but also out of a desire to break out of their own routine, in pursuit of enriching experiences which will enable them to bridge the generational gap and touch their students' hearts (see section 4.5 for more on emotional expectations).

## 4.2 Why Learn about the Shoah in Israel? The Aims of German Education Ministries

The coordination of the educational trips to Israel involves multiple inter-connected actors, each with unique agendas and expectations. In this section we consider the objectives of the Yad Vashem seminar and the Israel journey from the perspective of the German education ministries which organize them. All sixteen German federal states currently send teacher groups to Yad Vashem for professional development in Shoah education. Yet given the German teachers' geographical proximity to European primary sites, memorials, and museums, a key question arises: What motivation lies behind the decision of the federal states and their education ministries to finance teacher expeditions to Israel? Documents and interview data indicate that ministry goals have changed slightly over the years. Recalling older cooperations with Yad Vashem from the 2000s, ministry representatives maintained that remembrance was a focus at the beginning. However, more recent cooperation descriptions, state agreements, and media presentations emphasize modern anti-Semitism in Germany as a relevant motivation for sending German teachers to Israel. Several of the federal states' education ministries explicitly set forth expectations in their published materials and calls for application regarding the outcome of their teachers' participation in the Yad Vashem seminars. The continuing education division of one German state's education ministry declares on its website that the aim of the seminars is "to enable teachers to deal intensively with the problems of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, right-wing radicalism and violence in the classroom through intensive treatment of the Holocaust and personal encounters with contemporary witnesses." As an example of promotional material disseminated to many of the teacher-participants in our study, this statement demonstrates how some education ministries directly link learning about the Shoah and meeting survivors in Israel with the prospect of strengthening teachers' educational work against racism, anti-Semitism, and right-wing extremism in contemporary Germany.

Interviews with representatives of the education ministries sponsoring the teacher groups allowed for the reconstruction of the subjective educational concepts and concerns associated with sending teachers to an Israeli Holocaust memorial for professional development seminars. Dominique, the ministry representative from an East German state, likened the journey to Yad Vashem to “a cream topping, after Auschwitz and Theresienstadt,” providing an experience beyond that which is available locally. Similarly, Alex, a West German ministry representative, acknowledged that while in his state they have “excellent memorial places with regard to their didactic resources, also more of such memorial places,” there was something decidedly special about Yad Vashem:

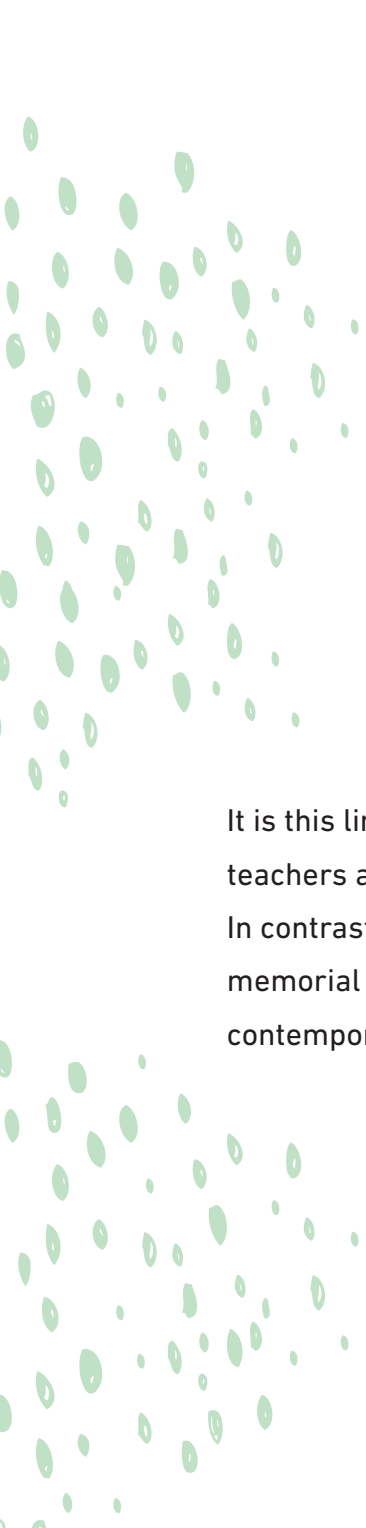


*But to learn the history of the Shoah, the details until the last room of the main exhibition in Yad Vashem, which ends with Hatikvah<sup>8</sup> and the independence and then you walk out onto this terrasse, looking over the mountains of Judea.*

Here the representative refers to the stunning view overlooking the Judean Hills upon visitors' exit from the Yad Vashem museum, constituting a direct link between the Shoah and the land of Israel. This physical representation of the historical connection between the Holocaust and Israel's establishment reflects the particularistic Holocaust narrative co-opted by the State of Israel as justification for its existence (Resnik, 1999, 2003) and upon which Yad Vashem's mandate is based. As a logical extension of Shoah history, the conception of modern Israel as a Jewish refuge is best understood through a visit to the Jewish State.

Dana (German Desk) also emphasized the close association between the Holocaust and Israel when asked what teachers might gain from a visit to Yad Vashem that cannot be learned from German or European memorial sites:

8 | Israel's national anthem, whose title translates to “The Hope.”



*First of all, the Shoah is also very connected to Israel as a place. The Shoah is very present here because of the post-war history and the survivors and their children. And what teachers can learn here, what is not yet considered much in German memorial places, are Jewish perspectives about the Shoah. ...But I also think it is an important experience for the teachers to be in a Jewish-majority society, to see what it is like with Jews and Jewish life all around them. That is a new experience for them.*

It is this linkage between past and present which is unavailable to German teachers at home, where evidence of modern Jewish life is virtually nonexistent. In contrast to the focus on distanced historical documentation common in German memorial sites (Yair, 2014), the Israel journey enables an encounter with contemporary Jews, whose importance is echoed by Alex:

*Maybe they also take with them that the history of the Jewish murders, and the existence of Israel, takes on a new meaning against the background of all they know. That we carried out a mass murder, and that there are all these lives that they would not normally encounter. ...There they see living Jews. And many things surprise them, people who come for the first time.*

Considering their lack of exposure to Jewish communities at home, the emotional burden of generational guilt, and media reports of Israeli–Palestinian violence, many German teachers initially have a “fear of Israel,” in the words of Dominique, yet such anxieties quickly disappear soon after their arrival at Yad Vashem.

German Desk staff and ministry representatives agree that the teachers’ stay in Israel, and exposure to Jews and Jewish perspectives, has a transformative effect upon the German teachers. However, differences emerge between East German and West German federal states’ ministries regarding exactly how this transformation ought to be achieved, as well as for what ends. Dominique, the




ministry representative from the East German state, explicitly emphasized the goal of strengthening pedagogical practice: "It's about improving the teaching here. The teachers return from the training courses at Yad Vashem completely different. They are emotionally moved by being there, to experience the country directly, not just from the newspaper." It becomes clear from the ministry's perspective that the goal of "improving the teaching" translates into solving the myriad of challenges present in German schools, including increasing anti-Semitic tendencies and teachers' under-prioritization of the topic. Dominique further explained: "It's about creating incentives to deal with a difficult topic, increasing the teachers' motivation to deal with it. It is difficult here... xenophobia, the strengthening of the right-wing." From the perspective of the ministry representative, the promise of the Yad Vashem seminar, coupled with the German encounter with Jewish life in Israel, lies in its perceived ability to combat anti-Semitism and the New Right.

The German Desk staff identified a tendency for East German groups to focus on the Yad Vashem seminar and its emphasis on teaching materials and didactics, in alignment with the goals outlined by the East German ministry representative. As Dana put it: "East German groups are perhaps more interested in the educational work, that is more in the focus. How can I convey something? How can I teach better? How can I work with the material with my students? They can discuss it well and deeply." Referring to her experiences with different East German teacher groups, Lotta (German Desk) acknowledged that "they need more help with their AfD<sup>9</sup>- pupils," given the strengthening of the New Right. In contrast, West German federal states tend to organize comprehensive programming for their groups alongside the seminar, with greater emphasis placed on learning about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dana confirmed that "for the West German states it is important to have a lot next to the seminar... and visit a lot of other places about the Middle East conflict." From the perspective of Dominique, it is the Yad Vashem workshops which serve as the catalyst for teacher transformation. Alternatively, according to Alex, the ministry representative for a West German federal state, the

9 | Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) is a far-right political party.



real transformative power of the Israel journey lies in the breaking of dominant narratives that occurs beyond the limits of the Yad Vashem campus on his state's extended touristic program:



*Israel is totally sexy. It is all over the news here [in Germany] all the time. Everyone somehow feels a connection to the so-called conflict. Most teachers consider themselves to be strong fighters against anti-Semitism. Most teachers are of the opinion that Israel is making mistakes. The image of the poor Palestinians, who are oppressed only by Israelis, can break when you travel there. ...One returns from the airport a bit less self-confident than when you went there. This is what I would like.*

Foremost, Alex aims to stimulate a process of reflection and uncertainty for the teachers. From his perspective, German teachers cannot effectively teach the Holocaust while simultaneously harboring anti-Israel sentiments, especially if they aspire to fight against contemporary anti-Semitism through Shoah education. The trip is envisaged to create a narrative dissonance by disrupting common (mis)conceptions.


While there is a consensus among education ministry representatives, trip coordinators, and German Desk staff that the Israel journey has a powerful effect on teachers through exposure to a “Jewish-majority society,” the goals of such an encounter pedagogy vary. On the one hand, Dominique associates seminar participation with solving problems in German schools, such as a lack of interest in teaching the Shoah and increasing New Right tendencies. On the other hand, from the standpoint of Alex, the Israel journey is about breaking one-sided narratives. From his perspective, Alex is less concerned with tackling anti-Semitism in schools and more focused on addressing teachers' anti-Israel sentiment (stemming from contempt for Israeli policies vis-à-vis the conflict with the Palestinians), which he equates to latent anti-Semitism. Ultimately, both representatives and their respective ministries intend to inspire change through experience.

## 4.3 German Desk Staff Perspectives on Shoah Education and German Teacher Groups

In 1953 Yad Vashem received a mandate from the Knesset (Israeli parliament) to create a memorial museum and resource center committed to Holocaust commemoration, documentation, research, and education (Gross, 2018). Given the *in populo* nature of the site, located in the Jewish homeland, Yad Vashem presents an explicitly Jewish interpretation emphasizing victim narratives (Cohen, 2011). German teacher-participants encounter this Jewish perspective through the team at Yad Vashem's German Desk, who lead the seminar workshops. During the course of our research, the permanent German Desk team included between five and eight staff members, with variations due to personnel changes and parental leaves. Individual workshops are occasionally taught by staff from other departments in Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, as well as by external lecturers. The permanent staff, most of whom have Jewish family biographies, come from varied academic backgrounds and professional experiences, including teaching, philosophy, sociology, political science, media, oral history, and German studies. With the exception of one native Israeli, the German Desk staff grew up and studied primarily in German-speaking European countries before eventually moving to Israel. Accordingly, they are fluent German speakers who are familiar with Shoah commemoration discourses and practices in both Israel and Germany.

When interviewed, the German Desk staff underscored the Jewish perspective of the institution which shapes the seminar concept and their work with German teachers. During the teachers' introduction to Yad Vashem's pedagogical concept, Ronit (German Desk) remarked that she tries "to be very clear that in principle, this is actually a Jewish motivation that began back then and that is actually vital." Yad Vashem's "Jewish motivation" is distinguished by Dana from that of *in situ*, or primary, memorial sites, which often rely on perpetrator perspectives: "What teachers can learn here [i.e., Yad Vashem], which is not yet considered much in

German memorial sites, are Jewish perspectives on the Shoah.” Tamar (German Desk) elaborated on Yad Vashem’s Jewish perspective:



*We’re looking through Jewish eyes. ...That doesn’t mean we don’t mention other genocides, but people should understand that we are mostly focused on the Jewish story. And what is very important is that we focus on individual stories, so putting a face to the name.*


Tamar alludes to the fact that German teachers tend to draw associations between the Shoah and contemporary genocides, but that these do not fall within the scope of Yad Vashem’s mission. The particularistic approach of the German Desk, which emphasizes individual decisions and Jewish biographies, is often quite different from that which German teachers — influenced by official German commemorative culture, and shaped by their socialization within families, schools, and universities of the perpetrator society — are accustomed to.

German teachers arrive in Israel with an emotional heritage derived from interpretation patterns of intergenerational narratives, along with lofty expectations of emotionally moving experiences, reconciliation, and educational materials addressing modern anti-Semitism. Lotta explained, “Teachers expect that we would have developed something totally new.” In particular, participants have a desire “to get something from us” related to the prevention of anti-Semitism, since it “seems to be more and more present in everyday school life in Germany,” according to Leah. However, in the words of Tamar, the German Desk staff are “always saying that we didn’t want to deal with the [new] anti-Semitism” considering the historical nature of Yad Vashem’s mandate. Meanwhile, Dana found it “very interesting that the teachers have high expectations of an emotional experience,” despite the fact that “our

**German teachers arrive in Israel with an emotional heritage derived from interpretation patterns of intergenerational narratives, along with lofty expectations of emotionally moving experiences, reconciliation, and educational materials addressing modern anti-Semitism.**

approach and material at the German Desk are not focused much on emotions.” She later suggested that in the future they intend to integrate more self-reflective approaches into their concept. Beyond anticipation of an emotional catharsis, the teachers yearn for a rapprochement between Germans and Jews. “We want them to deal with the Jewish perspective,” Leah said, but “there is also an expectation, so to speak, of Germans being able to reconcile with Jews. And that is often perceived as a disturbance when Jews do not want it, or do not get involved.” These examples illustrate a pattern in which typical non-Jewish German teachers’ expectations are not in complete alignment with Yad Vashem’s mandate and the German Desk concept.

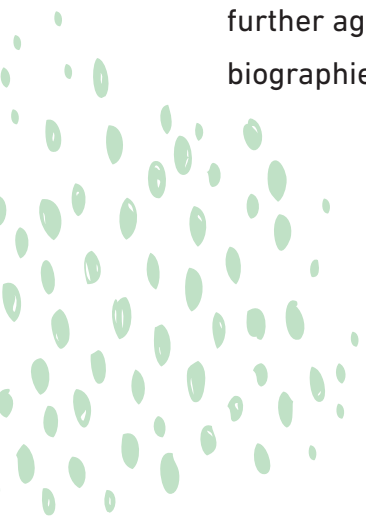
Given the discrepancies between German teachers’ expectations and Yad Vashem’s mission, the German Desk staff are positioned as mediators between these divergent perspectives. However, their role as Germans representing the Jewish-Israeli viewpoint often raises questions among curious teacher-participants. For example, Lotta reported that teachers from different groups would ask “many personal questions all the time” about whether she was Jewish and her family background. Leah described a similar bewilderment among teacher groups:



*How the groups perceive us, whether or not they see us as Jews at all, because we are almost all native [German] speakers. ...I often notice that there is also a bit of difficulty in grasping what we actually are and who we actually are. ...There is an irritation somehow about the existence of German Jews, who then explain their German history to German groups here in Israel. ...A lot of things come together that create strong tension and it often turns out that a lot is projected onto us.*

For the German teachers, the German Desk staff may embody a familiar habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) and sound like members of the post-perpetrator society, yet as Jewish employees of an Israeli organization, their reference frame is actually

that of the victim society. As Leah points out, this generates friction within the seminars as the German Desk staff are tasked with moderating between these opposing positions. The tension is particularly salient around discussions of perpetrator documents, comparisons between the Shoah and contemporary anti-Semitism, and questions concerning the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The German Desk staff understand the teachers' reaction to the topic of perpetrators (as presented in the seminar) as a mirror of German emotional heritage and Holocaust education practices, in which perpetrator documents are often used in an unreflected manner (see Gryglewski, 2018). As Lotta put it: "I have the general feeling when it comes to perpetrator documents that it also becomes emotional because I'm making conclusions about my own family. ...This feeling that you have to defend the perpetrators or justify explanations." From the position of the German Desk, most perpetrator documents are misleading, and therefore unable to provide accurate biographical information. The German Desk's focus on victim narratives and mistrust of perpetrator perspectives calls into question those routines with which teacher-participants are familiar, while further agitating those who are reluctant to confront disquieting family biographies. Ronit described her strategy for reducing this source of tension:



*I have now deliberately excluded from my concept, for example, all this psychologizing or this question, "But how can a person act like this?" ... Perpetrator sources are mostly falsified because they are driven by a certain interest, the perspective of the perpetrator. ...I learn nothing from it if I show offenders in their monstrosity.*

Like other staff members, Ronit cuts off teachers when they start speculating about perpetrator motivations based on unreliable sources. The challenge for the German Desk staff is therefore to quell participant thirst for sensational perpetrator "monstrosity," and to focus on verified victim perspectives instead.

Another source of seminar tension stems from an apparent mismatch between Yad Vashem's historical expertise and German teachers' interest in solutions for present-day anti-Semitism. Dana identified with the teachers' predicament,

stating, "I understand the need, it makes sense that they have it." While Dana once held "the position that there is no direct connection" between the Shoah and contemporary anti-Semitism in line with Yad Vashem's particularistic stance, her experience over the years at the German Desk has resulted in a shift in perspective:

*I am now of the opinion that it must be taken into account in educational work. ...One has to relate it to the present and to think how to create a meaningful mediation between Shoah education and the thematization of current forms of Anti-Semitism.*


Dana's remark reveals some uncertainty regarding the purely historical mandate of Yad Vashem and a sense of obligation to adapt somewhat to the needs of participants, for instance, by including a lecture on anti-Semitism and through the development of a new anti-Semitism workshop. Referring to this workshop, Leah explained:

*We have decided first to do something to encourage self-reflection in our participants, wherever they are themselves in dealing with this anti-Semitism, which maybe comes rather from the center of society. ...But I don't know to what extent we will ever be able to equip [them] methodologically.*

Within their role as mediators, the German Desk staff have decided to take-up modern anti-Semitism. However, the workshop is aimed at uncovering underlying anti-Semitic structures in German society rather than providing hands-on tools.

While the new workshop was developed to address tensions connected with contemporary anti-Semitism, it has the tendency to stir up agitation regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as teachers compare anti-Israel sentiment with anti-Semitism. Noomi (German Desk) noted that while German participants often

lack detailed knowledge about the parties to the conflict, they bring “strong emotional references” with them to the seminars. Noomi also perceived a growing tendency to link the Shoah with the Palestinian–Israeli conflict:



*This is a clear trend that we have noticed in recent years . . . whether it is because the students themselves ask more about it, or because it comes from the media, or because the teachers think about it that way. . . But also there are groups who, immediately after visiting the museum, ask in the reflection, “How can Israel do to the Palestinians what was done to them in the Holocaust?”*

Tamar also described the tension around this topic and how the German Desk staff have cautiously tried to tackle such criticism of Israel:

*There is a tension, it creates tension when they ask me, “OK, so what’s with the Palestinians?” But we are connecting it sometimes. . . We did build a workshop about anti-Semitism, and there we also compare between anti-Semitism and critique about Israel, which is usually connected to the Palestinians. And there this topic comes up a lot, but we are trying to make clear that it’s really not the same. It’s not a thing of comparison. And yeah, I mean, I understand the tensions and it’s hard for me, as well. Sometimes I am also tense because of that.*

The tension is palpable for the German Desk staff as they, as German-speaking representatives of the victim society, must contend with the German discourse of perpetrator-victim reversal (see Wetzel, 2013). While the German Desk has cautiously opened space for this discussion, Tamar’s emphasis that “it’s really not the same,” reinforces Yad Vashem’s particularist standpoint. As Sina (German Desk) candidly put it: “It is not our mandate here to clarify the Middle East conflict.” Instead of directly confronting the difficulties surrounding the

Palestinian question, the German Desk's workshop takes a roundabout approach, concentrating on latent anti-Semitism shrouded as disapproval for Israeli treatment of the Palestinian population.

German teachers, socialized within a perpetrator perspective, naturally draw associations between the Shoah and various contemporary social concerns, such as the plight of the Palestinians and new anti-Semitism associated with right wing German movements. However, the official position of Yad Vashem is that such universalist comparisons minimize the Shoah's singularity. Functioning as mediators, the German Desk staff must perform a balancing act as they attempt to address teacher needs while remaining loyal to Yad Vashem's historical mandate.



## 4.4 Teacher Familial and Educational Biographies in Relation to the Shoah

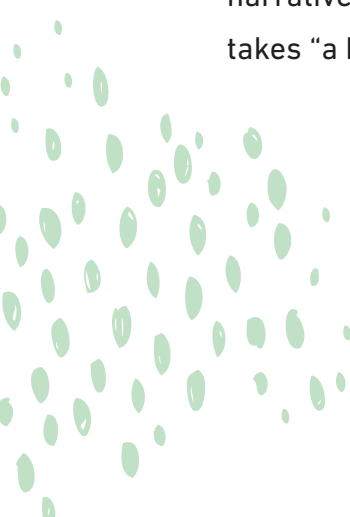
The teachers from Germany at the center of this study grew up as the so-called second, third, and fourth generation after National Socialism, meaning that their parents or (great) grandparents were contemporary witnesses of the Shoah. In this study, we do not make generational assignments of research participants based upon teachers' biological age; rather, we reference belonging to specific generations post-National Socialism in accordance with participant self-designation in interview narratives, which emerges as biographical connections to experiences and events rooted in collective generational memory. In this manner, we refer to a concept of generation in which generational self-descriptions are part and parcel of identity, reflecting "experience communities" (Jureit, 2006) and socialization within "memory milieus" (Eckmann, 2010b).

Uncertainties may surface in educational settings in which the crimes of National Socialism and the Shoah are examined, as emotional affiliations with perpetrators, bystanders, and victims are triggered. This can challenge participants and educators, both emotionally and cognitively, with regard to perceptions of social identity and feelings of belonging (Eckmann, 2010b). The framework of the Yad Vashem seminar and the stay in Israel activate such emotional references for German teachers during interviews and group discussions, stimulating their biographical self-positioning within cultural-historical narratives.

**Uncertainties may surface in educational settings in which the crimes of National Socialism and the Shoah are examined, as emotional affiliations with perpetrators, bystanders, and victims are triggered.**

Despite the temporal distance between the teachers and their relatives who lived during the Nazi era, many of the participants still understand their personal biographies as rooted in the perpetrator society. Martin (50s), for example, referred to himself and fellow participants in the group discussion before the

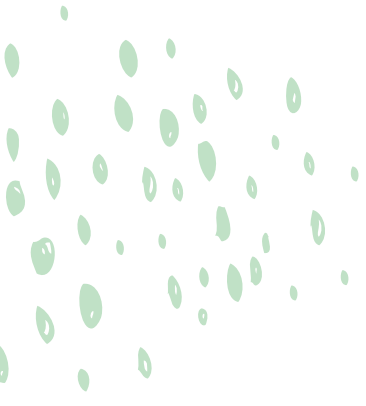
seminar as the “perpetrator people,” before elaborating “although we are of course, no longer that in the narrower sense, but it is of course, our historical tradition.” Based upon teacher discussions about their childhoods, both before and during the seminar, it becomes clear that this German historical tradition is closely tied-up with family biographies and the intergenerational transfer of narratives. Daniela (50s), classifying herself as “third generation,” shared that she takes “a bit of a perpetrator perspective with me,” explaining:



*As a German you always have such a special view on it, so that you take it with you, also how the grandparents became perpetrators there. In our family we also didn't talk much about it as my grandfather died relatively early, so there was not so much opportunity to clarify that. But anyway, I find one grew up with such a feeling.*

Daniela's statement admits knowledge of the involvement of her own grandparents, who were introduced as representatives of the previous generation of Germans. The connection of Daniela's upbringing with a particular feeling points to an intergenerational transmission of emotions. Although the substance of this feeling remains linguistically undefined, the logic of the position is clear: National Socialism is associated with a “feeling” that accompanied this teacher's childhood, yet this feeling is grounded in her family's lack of talking about the nature of the involvement.


Other teachers also refer to the silence of their relatives regarding the era of National Socialism. For instance, Gerda (50s) reported in the seminar introduction round, “In my family it was silenced with no end. A large bunker was built right behind the house, about which they said, ‘The war lived there.’” During an interview, Clara (50s) recalled seeking answers from her step-father, who served in the Waffen-SS: “Of course I have always asked. And when I asked, I was already grown up, I always got very poor information. ‘And we didn't know anything’ and so that was it.” While Reiner remembered his parents talking about it, the contents of such discussions remained nebulous:



*I'm still rather second generation and there is some kind of inherited debt. There is no longer a perpetrator, but somehow I can remember it there at home with my parents, who brought up these things, but somehow from a certain distance.*

Reiner's parents' sense of detachment is also transmitted between generations, evidenced by the phrase "these things" as an example of "empty speech" (Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008), in which vague terms obscure events, actions, and involvement. Yet even considering this pattern of "empty speech," the emotion of guilt, or indebtedness, is nonetheless transferred from parent to child.


Given typical patterns of silence and empty speech, most teachers, such as Barbara (40s), contended that there is no family connection:



*Biographically [I am] not at all [connected to the Shoah]. My two grandparents had a displaced refugee fate. They instead belong to the group who noticed a little something. They don't talk about it that much. ...But there is no personal reference from the family history.*

In alignment with previous research (e.g., Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020), Barbara's remarks reflect practices of silence and distorted narratives in relation to her family's involvement in the Shoah. She denies her family's belonging to the perpetrator society apart from her grandparents having "noticed a little something" — another example of "empty speech" which remains unelaborated. It is striking that this ambiguous speaking practice has been carried over into the professional context of the Yad Vashem seminar and its preparatory meeting, where teachers have gathered for the explicit purpose of dealing with the Shoah and transmitting its memory to future generations. As Barbara distances her family from involvement in National Socialism, she simultaneously focuses on the suffering of her grandparents as refugees from the advance of the Red Army at the end of the war in an example of self-victimization.


A family narrative of self-victimization concerning German expulsion from East Prussia was also related by Henning (50s) when asked about a family connection with the Shoah:



*Shoah not really, but more like the expulsion of my father. He was expelled from Prussia. Some people might see that a little differently than others. ...Only recently, when I was there for his birthday, did he let out a few things where I thought, oops, that doesn't really fit. ...We do not know what ultimately was transferred from the grandparents. ...I think there is still some trauma that the grandparents experienced that might come out, maybe to my children.*

The Shoah did not assume a prominent role in Henning's childhood; rather, it was his father's escape which was in the foreground. As Henning suggests the potential differences of opinion regarding his father's status as a victim, he distances himself from his father's recent statements by not specifying exactly what was "let out" concerning the family's involvement in National Socialism. Parents and grandparents may often only disclose their involvement and role in National Socialism through such hints (Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008), leaving younger generations with fragmented family narratives. Despite Henning's lack of clarity about his family's past, he points to the existence of a latent trauma passed on to today's generation of teachers, demonstrating how the consequences of the past shape the future. The actions and shame of parents and grandparents during the era of National Socialism are transmitted to children and grandchildren, who must deal with acquired feelings of guilt in the present, despite not having been complicit in the crimes themselves (Moré, 2014). Henning's reflection also reveals that the intergenerational transmission of emotions has focused not on empathy for the victims of persecution and mass murder, but on the individual suffering, self-victimization, and unprocessed trauma of members of the perpetrator society (see Giesen, 2004; Völter & Rosenthal, 1999).


When teachers mention Jewish victims in recounting their family narratives, the language is typically depersonalized and indirect. Monika (50s) described how her elderly aunt — who according to her narration recently broke decades of silence — witnessed the eviction of Jews from a mid-sized city in Eastern Germany:



*Jews were actually removed from there, and no one knew why ...they just vanished overnight. ...And she got hurt by that too, she suffered from it because they couldn't do anything. At the beginning [the family] tried to help a little while they [i.e., the Jews] were still living on their street. ...But they were taken away.*

Monika's version of events, in which Jews were simply "taken away" with no one knowing how or why, detaches the perpetrators from the act of persecution. Again, practices of self-victimization are evident, as Monika emphasized the pain endured by her aunt due to the family's inability to prevent the deportation of Jewish neighbors. Beyond the account's focus on the trauma of the perpetrator generation, it also highlights that Monika's family initially "tried to help a little." Other teachers also attempt to portray their relatives as somehow resisting National Socialism. Florian (40s), for example, stated that his mother "would have refused to sing certain verses from Nazi songs." These examples confirm the tendency for younger generations to portray older relatives as resisters, helpers, and unequivocally not Nazis (see Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008; Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020). Remarkably, Florian feels the need to excuse his mother's participation in National Socialism despite the fact that she would have been a young girl at the time. Florian's defense of his mother illustrates the stability of the perpetrator society narrative and the compulsion to construct the innocence of relatives, even if they were children.


While silences and vague references characterized most teachers' family narratives, Uli (30s) recounted detailed stories about his family members' involvement in the Shoah:



*I come from a family of perpetrators, and I also knew them all. ...We had a few in the family, even if they weren't standing right next to the gas chamber. But they were, as I said earlier, completely normal people [he laughs]. ...Oh, my grandpa wasn't the brightest candle on the cake [he laughs]. I'll say that now. His brothers weren't good either. ...They were nothing without their uniforms. As soon as they took off their boots and their jackets, they were completely normal people, some of whom couldn't even write a letter in German.*

In this instance, Uli openly talks about the participation of his relatives, yet posits their lack of intelligence as an excuse for complicity. While highlighting the normality of his grandfather and great-uncles, Uli simultaneously relativizes their actions, emphasizing that although they guarded the concentration camp, they did not actually work in the gas chambers alongside the real perpetrators. Uli's remarks serve as yet another instance of how younger generations refrain from identifying their parents and grandparents as collaborators in mass murder.


While the dominant perspective among German teachers without a migrant background is rooted in the skewed narratives of the perpetrator generation, teachers with a migration history come with "a very different perspective," in the words of Marita (50s), who emigrated from an East European country as a young adult. Marita distinguished herself from most of the other teachers by recalling friendships with Jewish children in her youth: "I grew up with Jewish children... it was normal for me to be in touch with the Jewish children." She described her first encounter with the German commemoration culture:



*I came to Germany at the age of 26, and in 1995, I experienced for the first time the day of remembrance of the liberation of Auschwitz. That triggered processes within me, which was almost an identity crisis, questioning, "Why, of all things, did I go to this country, out of my own free will?" And that moved me to do more with Jewish history, with German-Jewish history.*

Provoked by the national commemoration of the victims, Marita developed an acute awareness of the post-Holocaust society into which she immigrated. Unlike other teachers, whose reflections underscore the absence of familial guilt and indicate intergenerational struggles about responsibility, Marita did not grow up with practices of silence and denial. While those teachers who grew up in Germany articulate an unfamiliarity with Jews and Jewish culture, Marita emphasizes the normality of growing up with Jewish children in an East European country. Perceiving a considerable distance between her own socialization and those practices of the post-National Socialism society, Marita tries to deal with Germany's uncomfortable past through the study of German-Jewish history.

Nearly all the German-born teachers were quick to deny any family history of anti-Semitism, yet Alexandra (20s), whose family immigrated to Germany from the former USSR, called her mother following a seminar reflection entitled "Holocaust and Me" to confront her use of anti-Semitic stereotypes in stories:

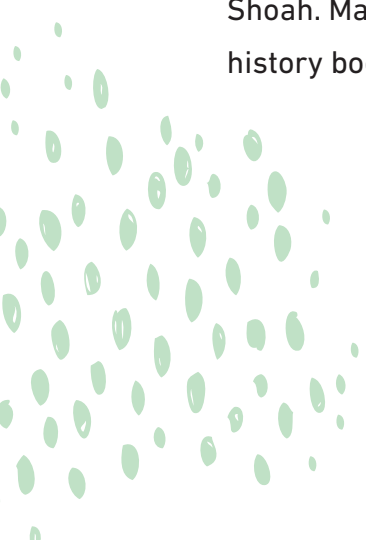


*My mother, in particular, is actually anti-Semitic. ...That moment, when it was about really becoming aware of "Holocaust and me," is when it first became clear how anti-Semitic she actually is. ...I called her directly afterwards. I said, "Mom, why do you always tell me that [story], are you anti-Semitic?" I was really so kind of shocked. ...I then asked myself, "Why am I doing all this now?" Apparently it's not because my parents taught me not to be racist.*

It is noteworthy that the only teacher who admitted phoning a parent directly from Israel to challenge their anti-Semitism is a participant whose family was not part of the perpetrator society. Perhaps Alexandra can speak more frankly with her anti-Semitic immigrant mother compared with those teachers whose families comprise the German post-Holocaust society, which is characterized by routine silences about the Shoah. This instance demonstrates how teachers' memories and narratives can be re-framed during the Israel journey. Participation in the Yad Vashem seminar stimulates biographical reflections which vary considerably depending upon the "shoes" (see Özyürek, 2018) worn by teachers upon their



arrival in Israel and the perspectives from which they take part in the experience. Considering the patterns of silence, ignorance, ambiguous hints, and self-victimization within their families, most teachers identified schools, memorials, and history books as sources for their initial encounter with the Shoah. Many teachers, such as Bert (40s), initially stumbled upon the Shoah in a history book:




*I cannot think of any direct family connections. The first encounter with the subject of the Shoah, the Holocaust, was actually in a bookstore. ...I opened the illustrated book, and it totally floored me. That must have been around the age of thirteen, and since then the topic has basically never let me go.*

Also denying any family stories related to the Shoah, Max likewise described what he called a “kind of fascination” originating from a children’s history book with a “double page” on the era of National Socialism. He related his earliest memory, looking at photographs of the liberated Buchenwald concentration camp in the book: “To see a lot of completely emaciated people. ...It totally disturbed me, this picture, and I was wondering what happened back then, what made people look like this?” Max and Bert both emphasized how these early extrafamilial encounters in history books represented turning points which piqued their interests and motivated further study about the topic.

Other German teachers reported that they first found out about the Holocaust in school. Maren’s (20s) recollection of initially learning about the Shoah in school history lessons is quite typical. Thankful not to have had to confront uncomfortable family narratives, Maren indicated that her participation in the Yad Vashem seminar prompted her to reflect on her own personal biography:






*In terms of family, I actually don't have any points of contact. I say now, "Thank God!" That means I didn't have to deal with anything in terms of family history. In fact, I only came into contact with it at school. So I thought about it in the seminar yesterday, I couldn't think of anything beforehand. I think it was really first in history class, and then, of course, because of my personal interest in my studies.*

Silence about the Shoah was not only characteristic of families with unambiguous perpetrator backgrounds (as attested to by teacher-participants), but even families without clear-cut perpetrator narratives seem to delegate discussion of the Holocaust to German schools. Yet even within German schools, communication about the Shoah often remained incomplete, especially for the teacher-participants in their 50s and 60s. During the group discussion prior to the start of the seminar, Christa (50s) contemplated how her teachers dealt with the Shoah: "So in my school class it was still, how should I say it, heavily taboo, heavily fraught with guilt and shame. So, I felt that way." Such statements reveal how skewed family narratives and guilt were paralleled in German schools.

Family silences in East Germany under the GDR were coupled with curricula and memorial visits (to Buchenwald, in particular) which emphasized a heroized communist resistance. In preparation for the Israel journey, Winfried opened up his old history textbook and reflected on the curriculum in the GDR:



*The subject of National Socialism is primarily more anti-fascist, from the point of view of the resistance campaign, and especially the subject of Communist resistance, anyway. I checked it again. I took an old history textbook, and the subject of Shoah was mentioned at one point on two pages.*

Minimal references to the Shoah in the curriculum, along with heroization of the Communist resistance, also characterized Lore's (50s) memories of her school

days in the GDR: "The focus was actually on the role of the other army, the role of Stalin as the great hero who commanded the army and set us free." Similar to family stories which emphasize the suffering of parents and grandparents, the curriculum in the GDR tended to gloss over German involvement in persecution, war crimes, and mass murder.

The trend of incomplete mediation of the Shoah in family and formal school education extended to teachers' university studies, as well. Interviewed teachers disclosed that they were completely unprepared, or marginally prepared at best, for teaching the Shoah during their university training.

Despite his initial childhood captivation in the bookstore, Bert, who later studied history at the university, "didn't attend a single lecture on the subject of the Holocaust during the whole course."

Max, who similarly cannot remember dealing with the Shoah in university, affirmed "that the studies did not prepare me for it in any way." This lack of preparation is mentioned not only by history teachers but also by


teachers of other subjects in which the Holocaust often comes up, such as literature and ethics. Selvi (20s), an ethics teacher, recalled learning "a lot about religion, also about Judaism, but that the topic of the Holocaust was ...summarized in just ninety minutes." This confirms the findings of Nägel and Kahle (2018) that students at many universities complete teacher-training programs without attending courses or lectures on the Holocaust. These gaps in teacher education help to explain why, over the course of the Yad Vashem seminar, German teachers continually emphasize the formidable challenge of conveying the Shoah in an age-appropriate and didactically sensible way.

**Interviewed teachers disclosed that they were completely unprepared, or marginally prepared at best, for teaching the Shoah during their university training.**

## 4.5 In Search of Inspiration and Intensity: Teachers' Emotional Expectations

During the pre-seminar group discussions, teachers from all four federal states expressed a yearning to feel something unique in the upcoming further education program at Yad Vashem. For example, Rita (40s) stated, "I expect inspiration that somehow something touches me, far from just cognitively understanding but deeper, touching me underneath. ...I also expect somehow to get a feeling for the whole matter." Rita does not anticipate finding inspiration purely through the factual content of the seminar, but also through an emotional encounter. However, the nature of the hoped-for emotions remains just as nonspecific as when participants describe those feelings associated with their childhood memories. Rita's use of the phrase "the whole matter" in connection with her desire to feel is another example of distanced and detached "empty speech" (Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008) with regard to the events of the Shoah. Reflecting the fact that those generations after National Socialism often grew up with only vague outlines of the events transmitted in intergenerational dialogues, participants like Rita are searching to fill-in what is perceived as an emotional gap.

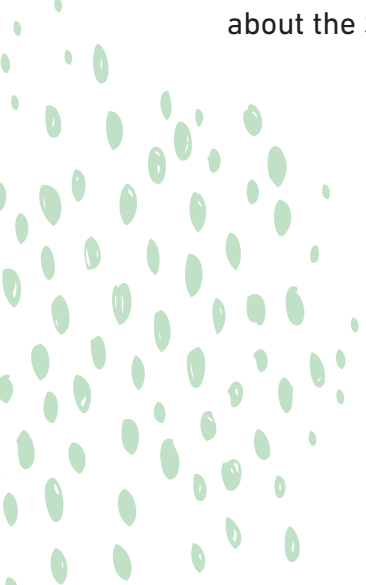
Not only is the visit to Yad Vashem envisioned as laden with emotional experiences even before the training begins, but teachers, such as Gerda, imagined these experiences as particularly intense: "I hope for an intensity through the duration of the stay and also through this special place." Gerda's labeling of Yad Vashem as a "special place" was echoed by other participants, whose use of such religious descriptors as "magical," "holy," and even "sacred" position the journey as a spiritual pilgrimage. Continuing with this metaphor of the visit as a pilgrimage of purification, Clemens (30s) declared that he expects cathartic moments during his stay in Yad Vashem:



*I kind of expect something mega emotional actually, what I would call catharsis in the theatre...In concentration camps I can look around, but then I consider that the perpetrators somehow did this. But this memorial [i.e., Yad Vashem] is somewhere in the heart of the people who somehow were mainly affected.*

Clemens' remarks reflect an expectation of personal purification, or catharsis, by virtue of his physical presence within the homeland of the Jewish victims of National Socialism. It is neither an examination of the history of the Shoah, nor of everyday Jewish life during German Fascism, but the potential emotional experience generated by proximity to living and breathing Jews that comes into focus. In contrast to the European concentration camp memorials, Yad Vashem — a space symbolically free of perpetrator influence — is positioned as the only location where a genuine cleansing is envisaged to be possible.

Teachers explicitly link their preconception of Vad Vashem as a transformative site to their expectation that afterwards, upon their return to everyday school life in Germany, they will finally touch their students emotionally because of their own intense emotional experiences in Israel. For example, Alexandra noted she does not “have the easiest pupils either and they listen to you better when they notice that you are honest, and when you have just been there yourself and really tell from your own [experience].” This link reflects the common professional challenge of many participants to engage multicultural classrooms, consisting of students increasingly removed from the period of National Socialism, in learning about the Shoah. Claudia (40s) explained:



*I really want to have a lively lesson, and if I go in there [i.e., the classroom] with more feeling because I've already been there, I can also convey that to the students, and especially with my students, that's the way I can catch them, only with the feeling. ...And when I'm authentic, they all go with it and then I also enjoy teaching. ...I was in Sachsenhausen last year, for example, and then I was just talking a lot and then I caught them with it, and then the whole lesson was on fire.*

According to Claudia, “authentic” teaching results from her visits to memorial sites, such as Sachsenhausen and Yad Vashem. Here, too, it is the emotions connected with these places of remembrance which enables a transformative experience, both for the teacher, and vicariously for her students. While the specific feelings Claudia desires to evoke from students remain ambiguous, she maintains that they cannot be reached without an emotional touch. This sentiment was echoed by Thomas (50s), who asserted that teachers must be careful “that it does not become a pure knowledge thing” or that lessons on the Shoah consist solely of “memorizing a few facts.” Participants seem to favor an emotional, rather than cognitive, approach as the most effective means of attracting student attention.

## 4.6 Confronting Emotional Heritage and Perpetrator-Centered Perspectives

Despite the looming presence of the Shoah in the official German culture of commemoration, interviews with German teacher-participants reveal a sketchy and incomplete mediation of the subject in families (Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020), as well as in primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. Given the indirect mediation of the Shoah through history books and lessons, many young people in Germany approach the subject from a purely intellectual standpoint, viewing the Holocaust as a historical object seemingly unrelated to their personal family history. This may help to explain teachers' desire to experience powerful emotions over the course of the seminar, in contrast to the distant, cognitive mediation which characterized their initial contact in the classroom or bookstore. Even though the generations after National Socialism often grew up with silence or incomprehensible messages regarding the Shoah within their families, it remains very much present on an emotional level, the meaning of which the German teachers in this study largely have to construct for themselves.

These constructions emerge over the course of the Yad Vashem seminar as skewed biographical narratives and views of relatives from a normalized perpetrator perspective, mirroring Gryglewski's (2018) observations about Shoah education in schools and memorials. Expressing frustration with Lotta's (German Desk) portrayal of Nazis as "one-dimensional" people "who don't have any remorse" during a seminar workshop, Jutta (40s) also engaged in a process of self-victimization:

*My great uncle, until the end of his life, talked about nightmares about when he was serving as a soldier in the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front. And he suffered from it his whole life and I think it affected me in this situation. ...Maybe it is also about some family history and stories which decide about what things you say. ...It is significant for the way I teach the Holocaust.*

Here Jutta acknowledges the direct impact her family history has not only on her participation in the seminar, but on her teaching practices, as well. However, the precise way in which her biography is expressed within the classroom remains unelaborated.

Biographical relationships to National Socialism and the Shoah are addressed by teachers in the seminar, but related issues, such as that of responsibility, emerge primarily regarding the role of the teacher and not that of one's relatives. Consequently, responsibility is typically negotiated in relation to one's own students. Bernd (60s), who classified himself in the group discussion as "third generation," asserted: "I feel responsible that things that happened here do not happen in Germany anymore." These "things" that are again indicated in the mode of "empty speech," however, do not refer to his familial connection to National Socialism, but to his position as a teacher. Despite the documented lack of professional training, the professional role can be understood here as a reference point that is always available, through which it is possible to relate to the learning objective and to avoid self-reflection on the teacher's own emotional connection and biographical points of contact.

German teachers bring an emotional heritage, derived from fragile, vague, and skewed intergenerational narratives to the Yad Vashem seminar. It is suggested that the biographical shaping of emotions influences teachers' interactions with students during lessons about the Holocaust. As the teachers struggle to reflect on this emotional heritage over the course of the seminar, they are simultaneously tasked with conceptualizing how they act as mediators of such intergenerational traditions for their students. Participants' perpetrator-centered perspectives, however, conflict with Yad Vashem's emphasis on Jewish experiences, victim biographies, individual "choices," and the concept of all non-persecuted Germans profiting from "dictatorship of consents." Leah explained the German Desk's

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pedagogical rationale for dealing with the involvement of individuals and their choices: "History is the sum of human actions which comprise it. That is what we want to convey." While the German Desk attempts to moderate between the discourses rooted in participants' family narratives and those emerging from the seminar, several staff members emphasized in narrative interviews that they perceive significant tension and emotional engagement when it comes to the perpetrator topic (see section 4.3 on staff perspectives).


Observed expressions of teachers' displeasure when seminar lectures deal directly with German involvement in the Shoah corroborate the German Desk staff's perceptions. Following a lecture on the Final Solution, in which an invited guest scholar (from outside Yad Vashem) stated that all Germans had a choice during the era of National Socialism, Tanja (40s) and Gudrun (50s) informed the accompanying researcher of their irritation during a coffee break. "The normal population, they weren't all in favor. They had few opportunities to show that," Tanja said. Gudrun turned around and nodded, and the two participants continued the conversation, agreeing that the average German citizen did not have the ability to engage in meaningful protest against the actions of the Nazi regime. Such reactions illustrate how seminar content addressing a broad involvement of Germans in the Shoah and individual decision-making rattles teachers' familiar narratives. Participants, such as Gudrun and Tanja, reassure each other in informal chats as they confirm the routine narrative that the "normal population" had few options for resistance. For the German teacher-participants, the tension created in the seminar around the perpetratorship, profiteering, and involvement of average Germans in the Shoah constitutes a framework for later expressions of relief during their subjectively meaningful encounters with Israeli Jews, whom teachers describe as "forgiving" and "open" (see sections 4.9 and 4.10 on encounters with Israeli Jews and Holocaust survivors).

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## 4.7 How to Compare? Contemporary References and Shoah Pedagogy

Throughout seminar discussions, numerous questions are raised regarding the role that contemporary references should play in Holocaust pedagogy. In light of the growing generational distance between current students and the era of National Socialism, teachers express a desire to touch their students emotionally by making comparisons between the Shoah and current forms of group-related violence and persecution. In the words of Dana: "The question about contemporary references, the relevance, what are the lessons of the Shoah for today, how past, present and future are related. ...It gets stronger, maybe because of the distance, also, the generational distance to the topic." Teachers, such as Reiner, emphasized in a group discussion the need to make connections to the present given concerns over the ability of today's youth to imagine that people are capable of committing such horrific crimes against other human beings:



*I see another danger where you say it will be very routine. When you look at this unbelievable number of people. ...The question is, can you imagine that people could do something like that at all? ...You can't even imagine that people are so mean, so angry ...you don't even have words for it.*

To combat the challenge of historical distance, the sense of routine, and the inconceivability of the crimes, current events are connected with the past to illustrate how National Socialism gained approval within the German population. For Rita, the Shoah serves as an extreme example of current forms of group-related enmity: "The crimes in Auschwitz are actually only examples ...of what we experience as group-related enmity. ...Anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, right-wing radicalism, are all forms of group-related misanthropy, so it is simply closely interlinked." Such linking of the Shoah with various current events and political questions has become a widespread practice in German Holocaust pedagogy within the last decade (see Gryglewski, 2018). When teachers

directly equate the Shoah with examples of current group-related discrimination and violence, they diminish the genocidal aspect of the Holocaust, while also depriving students of the opportunity to make their own associations with the Shoah.

While the teachers and German Desk staff agree that contemporary references are pedagogically relevant for reaching students on an emotional level, tensions emerge during the seminar revolving around which contemporary references are acceptable and how they ought to be utilized. The difference in references made by German teachers and those deemed appropriate by the German Desk staff is clearly expressed in the following exchange, which took place during one group reflection on the Yad Vashem exhibition.

*Leah (German Desk):*

*I think it is not possible to speak about a genocide without emotions. One would not talk about the Rwandan genocide without emotion. It is always difficult to teach the Holocaust. It is always overwhelming.*

*Maren:*

*Because it is not enough just to convey facts.*

*Leah:*

*Exactly, not just facts.*

*Max:*

*The picture with the beard reminded me of a situation I had with neo-Nazis, who humiliated me when I was 14. I was caught by five Nazis who hit me in the park. Maybe you can tie in with "Refugees Not Welcome."*

*Leah:*

*I think references to the present are very important. For example, I had a situation with a school class in [city name] where Syrian students talked about poison gas attacks. These are genocidal experiences. ...Of course, there are always parallels. Pictures from the Shoah always speak to something like that.*

*Beate (30s):*

*It reminds me of a student from Afghanistan who was placed against the wall by several police officers and searched. He wanted to say something and they said to him, "Shut up. Complain, we're five, you're one." And "You'll then complain to the police about the police?"*

Leah and Maren concur on the necessity of conveying facts and developing an emotional response through an examination of parallel experiences. Yet in the above discussion excerpt, the teachers linked the Shoah to current events and their own experiences in Germany (police violence against refugees and neo-Nazi attacks), whereas the German Desk staff drew comparisons solely with contemporary genocides (in Syria and Rwanda). The teachers, Beate and Max, call upon very different chains of association than those which are endorsed by Leah and the German Desk.

The staff of the German Desk continuously cautioned against the direct comparison of events, emphasizing that teachers must highlight the contextual differences between the Shoah and present-day incidences of persecution and group-related forms of violence. For example, during the Bialystok workshop teachers were inclined to make comparisons to recent waves of civil disobedience, such as Antifa demonstrations and clashes between police and protestors during the 2017 G20 Summit in Hamburg. Despite Katharina's (30s) insistence that "the reference to the present is an important question for history didactics," Lotta (German Desk) was adamant about resisting improper comparisons: "The story and the context of the story. Don't make any limping comparisons. More like comparisons to the 1930s, but not the comparison between '41 and today." Educators from the German Desk express the position that an appropriate point of comparison to the present could be the anti-Semitic subculture of the Weimar Republic, or the early 1930s, but not the height of the genocide against the Jews. The hesitant attitude of the German Desk toward haphazard comparisons can be understood within the context of Yad Vashem's

organizational self-understanding as an institution with a historical mandate to preserve Holocaust memory from a Jewish perspective. From the particularistic Jewish position which has been advanced by the State of Israel, and also integrated within some German and global discourses (Gray, 2014), the Shoah is a unique, incomparable event.

As a substitute for the direct comparison of events, the German Desk advocates an approach in which discourses, choices, and actions are compared instead. When interviewed, Dana described how Yad Vashem's curricular material on the St. Louis, a German ship carrying Jewish refugees to Cuba, relates to the current refugee crisis:

*For example, to compare refugees on boats over the Mediterranean Sea today when we work on the material about the St. Louis.<sup>10</sup> You cannot compare the political situation of 1939 and today. But you also cannot compare one-to-one the situation of the people on the boats. So what we did is to reflect on the social discourses about boat refugees, how societies react to refugees on a boat, the question of who helps and saves them.*

Once again, the incomparable nature of Nazi Germany to current affairs is emphasized in Dana's remarks. While the events themselves cannot be compared, the German Desk suggests connecting past with present by considering the relevance of individual decision-making and actions. In their workshops, the German Desk staff regularly focus on the importance of such everyday individual choices in determining the course of history during the era of National Socialism (the choices of individual actors leading to the Bialystok Massacre, for instance). According to Tamar, the analysis of choices in the St. Louis material is one


example of how the German Desk is "trying to create empathy" through the use of contemporary references.

10 | Cuba ultimately refused entry to the refugees on board the St. Louis, as did the United States and Canada. Eventually the ship was forced to return to Europe, where many of the passengers perished at the hands of the Nazis.

Yet, as evidenced by Dana's caveat that there cannot be a "one-to-one" comparison, the staff also emphasizes that students must actively distance themselves from the Shoah and contextualize present experiences of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. As Ronit put it, although it may be contrary to their instincts, teachers must help students "to stay in their shoes" while remaining "emotionally in the present."

## 4.8 Addressing Anti-Semitism in German Schools

German teachers' participation in Yad Vashem's seminars takes place against the background of increasing anti-Semitism and the rise of the New Right in Germany. As previously noted, some of the education ministries' calls for application directly linked the aim of the seminars with working against the anti-Semitic violence, racism, and New Right tendencies present in German schools and society. Many teachers referred to the challenge of responding to modern anti-Semitism in their schools. In the three Western federal states observed in this study, teachers typically associated recent waves of anti-Semitism with Muslim immigrant students. For example, during a group discussion before the seminar, Alexandra matter-of-factly connected her school's Muslim students with anti-Semitism:



*My school has about eighty percent students with a migration background, although we have a lot of students who are of Muslim faith and since the aspect of anti-Semitism plays a major role, a very, very important role. ...We have to do an incredible amount of work.*

This coupling of anti-Semitism and the "Muslim faith" reflects dominant discourses within German society, which position anti-Semitism as an issue associated with specific groups of students.

While Muslim students are understood to be the root of the problem by some West German teachers, in East Germany, where the Muslim population is significantly smaller, teachers recognize other student groups as sources of anti-Semitic sentiment during seminar discussions. In the one East German group observed in this study, Frauke (50s) referred to anti-Semitism among her special education students, while Henning pointed to his vocational students, who frequently use anti-Semitic slurs such as "Judensau" (Jewish pig). Henning related that "on the construction site, jokes on Jews are everyday life," and that

his students have “no previous education, nothing comes from the parents’ home.” These examples illustrate how East and West German teachers, most with academic degrees from primarily middle-class backgrounds, associate anti-Semitism with those populations outside of their own social milieu (e.g., students with a Muslim family background, special needs students, vocational students). Furthermore, teachers primarily conceive of anti-Semitism in schools as solely a problem among students, even though current research indicates a significant portion of anti-Semitic incidents in German schools is experienced via interactions with teachers, or as a result of teacher passivity in response to anti-Semitic attacks perpetrated by students (e.g., Bernstein, 2020).

Often overwhelmed by the task of addressing anti-Semitism within their schools, teachers are motivated to make the pilgrimage to Yad Vashem by the expectation that they will return to Germany better equipped to respond to anti-Semitic acts carried out by students of a “migration background,” or those with “no previous education” from the home. Given the prevailing socio-political climate in Germany, teachers, such as Daniela, routinely “expect something about anti-Semitism from the seminar.” Vanessa (50s), describing her work “to promote democracy in schools and against extremism,” expressed a hope that Yad Vashem can provide fresh tools with which teachers can combat extremism: “In addition to right-wing radicalism and religious extremism, Salafism, we are now also dealing with anti-Semitism. ...How we go to schools, that is my primary concern, simply to get new ideas.” Some teachers understand addressing modern anti-Semitism and the New Right within present-day German society as a more pressing concern than rehashing the increasingly distant history of National Socialism. In the words of Tamar: “I think that this generation is maybe a bit less concerned about the history. ...They care more about now and the future.”

Despite teachers’ desire to acquire tools in Israel to confront anti-Semitism at home, Yad Vashem’s German Desk does not consider contemporary anti-Semitism to fall within the scope of their historical mandate to preserve Holocaust memory.

From the standpoint of the German Desk, the Yad Vashem seminars are decidedly centered on teaching the Shoah from a Jewish perspective. Vanessa reflected on these conflicting viewpoints during the seminar from her perspective as a participant:

*History is always repeating itself, and here [i.e., at Yad Vashem] I have the impression that something like this has never happened before, that this genocide is unique. Whereas I say it is not unique. But in the moment, when I would express it like this, they would understand it as if I were to deny the severity.*

German teachers may naturally draw associations between the Shoah and different contemporary social problems (Gryglewski, 2018), yet the position of Yad Vashem is that such universalist comparisons serve to de-emphasize the uniqueness of the Shoah, and therefore ought to be avoided.

This tension between different perspectives was also brought to the fore during the Bialystok workshop, in which participants engaged in role-play as they considered the choices made by historical individuals on the day of the 1941 Bialystok Massacre. Intended to illustrate that the Holocaust, as a historical event, is, in the words of Leah, the “sum of human actions,” the workshop instead transported participants to the present, where they pondered anti-Semitic choices made by contemporary actors. Reflecting on the recent Halle synagogue terror attack in October 2019, Mirco (30s) asked, “How can you move [from the Bialystok material] towards anti-fascist education?” In response, Leah adamantly declared that teaching the Shoah cannot be used to tackle today’s anti-Semitism:

*You can't prevent something by teaching about the Holocaust. And you cannot teach the Holocaust and still want to teach something else. I cannot solve all the problems with it, with teaching about the Holocaust. I cannot solve the anti-Semitism problem in Germany, I cannot solve the neo-Nazi problem in Germany.*



Lotta offered similar words of caution when leading the Bialystok workshop with a different German group: "I would be careful using such clear comparisons. There is a difference between a demonstration in Germany and a genocide." Visibly agitated by Lotta's remark, Clemens, waving his hand, called out, "Okay, but the thing is, we are in Germany. We are awake, acknowledging things." In the shadow of the public remembrance culture and intergenerational guilt, some of today's German teachers, like Clemens, articulate an obligation to act against current anti-Semitism, unlike their parents and grandparents who may have made alternative choices.

While the German Desk staff routinely point out that "anti-Semitism is not our expertise," at the same time, they have offered a lecture on current anti-Semitism for several years, and have recently developed a new anti-Semitism workshop in response to teachers' demand. Ronit explained as she introduced the new workshop, entitled *Anti-Semitism Today*: "We didn't really want to deal with 'anti-Semitism today.' Yad Vashem is directed against daily politics. The Holocaust should not be tied between left and right." Dana also commented on the German Desk's reluctance to address this topic in an interview, disclosing that the development of the new workshop was approached with caution:



*Yad Vashem is careful about that. We have a lot of internal discussions and different opinions about this topic. Here, Yad Vashem is different from German memorial sites, which make political statements over Twitter about current political situations a few times a month.*

Despite Yad Vashem's hesitation to involve itself in current affairs, it is this very daily politics which encourages teacher participation in the seminars. For example, Niklas was motivated by contemporary concerns regarding the

resurgence of the far-right: “I am driven by anger and ignorance, recently the AfD<sup>11</sup> result in Thuringia of over twenty percent, asking myself, ‘How can I help to end the ignorance?’” Despite receiving few tangible answers to his question over the course of the Yad Vashem seminar, in his next breath Niklas declared, “The visit to the museum strengthened me.” Implicit in this statement is an assumption that simply fulfilling an emotionally charged Yad Vashem pilgrimage, whereby living Jewish relics are encountered in a Jewish state, may somehow help Niklas work against anti-Semitic beliefs held by students back in Germany. Just as the Shoah has become a “Jewish topic” in Germany instead of a topic for all members of the post-perpetrator society, teacher expectations to receive educational materials targeting modern anti-Semitism from Yad Vashem — a Jewish institution — likewise transform anti-Semitism into a “Jewish topic.” Although Adorno (1959/1998b, p. 101) decried this ubiquitous presupposition “that anti-Semitism in some essential way involves the Jews and can be countered through concrete experiences with Jews,” in the absence of Yad Vashem-designed pedagogical materials against anti-Semitism, our observations suggest that the Jewish encounter remains the most profound take-away (see sections 4.9 and 4.10 on encounters with Israeli Jews and Holocaust survivors).

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11 | Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), a far-right political party, received unprecedented levels of support in the 2019 Thuringian state election.

## 4.9 Encounters with Jewish Life in Israel

In Germany, Shoah education is often conflated with teaching about Judaism, positioning the Holocaust as exclusively a “Jewish topic.” During one workshop, Leah asserted, “It is important to us [i.e., the German Desk staff] that the subject of Judaism and the Holocaust do not coincide,” to which Heinrich (50s) confirmed: “That usually happens in Germany.” Given this categorization of the Shoah as a “Jewish topic,” some teachers at the preparatory meeting discussed their impressions that students feel they have “nothing at all to do” with the Holocaust and that it is “far away” from them. This perception of distance is not only temporal, but spatial, considering few German students, or their teachers, have had previous personal experiences with Jews. Out of the 88 German teachers in the four groups observed in this study, only one teacher, Anja (40s), mentioned presently knowing and teaching Jewish students at her school. Within this milieu where Jews are considered unknown Others, teaching about Judaism “quickly becomes folkloric,” in the words of Florian, a religion teacher.

As a result of “folkloric” imagery, stereotypes develop regarding who and what is a Jew. Tamar (German Desk) described the challenge of trying to overcome these stereotypes held by the German participants and explained that people who “don’t really know, and have never been to Israel, as well, they always imagine the Jews as this... ultra-orthodox, Haredi<sup>12</sup> guy... with the black clothes and beard.” Because of such stereotypes, teachers are bewildered by the German Desk staff, who are Jewish, yet don’t resemble the generalized image of Jews they have constructed. This was particularly pronounced in the group from East Germany, where contact with Jews may be even more limited, as evidenced by teachers’ difficulty in finding survivors to invite to their classrooms. Moritz recalled that some of his colleagues expressed shock when Leah shared her biographical details during the seminar: “Ah, what, you are Jewish?” Moritz contemplated this incident in a personal interview after his return home:

12 | A subset within Orthodox Judaism, characterized by members’ strict adherence to Jewish law.



*And I explained to myself that probably for Germans, a Jew must be someone really strange you can look at. But someone [referring to Leah] who is intelligent and so funny and you can talk normally to her, and she grew up in Germany, and speaks German, cannot be Jewish. And I understood that what we think about Jewish people is that they are so far away from us. I noticed that most teachers never thought before about what being Jewish means and to reflect on that.*

As the participants struggle to make sense of the German Desk pedagogues, who function as mediators between German and Jewish worlds, they engage in a process of Othering. Despite its physical location in Jerusalem, the seminar room is very much a German space: the participants are from Germany, most of the staff have German backgrounds, and the language spoken is primarily German. Just as it is back home, Jews are considered Others within this German context, reflecting the continuity of a historically Christian-rooted differentiation between the Jews and Germans, and a linguistic exclusion of Jews from a constructed German collective (Enzenbach, 2012).

When the German teachers venture beyond the Yad Vashem seminar room and explore Jerusalem in their free time, they suddenly find themselves surrounded by Jews and Jewish cultures. This visibility of Jewish cultures in Israel summons teachers to consider what they do not encounter in their day-to-day lives in Germany as a long-term consequence of the genocide of European Jews. Ben (German Desk) emphasized the lack of Jewish presence in contemporary Europe when guiding a teacher group through Yad Vashem's "Valley of the Communities," a massive Jerusalem stone monument engraved with the names of over five thousand Jewish communities wiped out during the Holocaust. As the group meandered through the maze of towering slabs of rock, Ben articulated that the Shoah was not only about destroying people but also

about eradicating an entire culture. Referring to long-gone Jewish marketplaces in European cities, such as Groningen, Ben likened their former hustle and bustle to Jerusalem's contemporary open-air Mahane Yehuda Market (known colloquially in Hebrew as "the *shuk*"), where hundreds of vendors hawk colorful produce, baked goods, meats, fish, and cheeses in stalls lining narrow alleyways: "The same jokes, the same noise, the same food. That no longer exists in Europe today." Such accentuation of what has been lost constitutes a stark contrast to the teachers' familiar German memorial culture, which focuses more on the crimes and guilt of the Shoah, and less on the irreparable loss of culture in its aftermath. For many teachers, the *shuk* functioned as a central attraction in their free evenings, when they would unwind over local Israeli beers at one of its popular pubs. In the *shuk*, teachers engaged in positive encounters with Israelis, which in retrospect, they perceive as authentic experiences. Beate reminisced, "I still can't believe how international it is," referring to the *shuk*, where "you can chat and talk to everyone [and] we got wreaths of flowers from Israeli hippies." Heinrich was also captivated by the unfamiliar Jewish cultures he discovered on the trip. Reflecting on his visit to the *shuk*, Heinrich stated that "we notice Israel when we walk into the city in the evening," and in general, described his encounters in Israel as "exotic, what you notice here."


In light of the German participants' overall lack of exposure to Jews at home, it emerges that an implicit goal of the secular pilgrimage to Israel is to encounter the "mythical" Jews in their homeland. For example, during the preparatory meeting, Niklas stated, "I really want to... culturally experience Israel and Jews from

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an inside perspective." Another teacher, Horst (50s), expressed his hope that "now you can actively work on current things together with Israeli people and I find that particularly beautiful." On the one hand, this desire is concretely expressed with regard to meeting Jewish Israelis and to forming new, or deepening existing, school partnerships with Yad Vashem. On the other hand, against the background of German guilt, the teachers project hopes of "beautiful" new beginnings. Through encounters with Jewish Israelis, the teachers seek to ease the inherited burden of the atrocities committed by their parents' and (great) grandparents' generation.

German teachers' reflections on generational guilt and on how Jews may perceive them reach a climax when groups tour the Yad Vashem exhibition. Reflecting on the museum visit, Berta explained her feeling of self-consciousness as a German:



*The closer we got to the concentration camps [i.e., the section on concentration camps in the exhibition], the more I had the feeling that I wanted to hide myself. I was ashamed as a German and thought, "What might the other visitors think as they pass by us, as a German group?"*

As the German participants confront the details of the Shoah in the condensed format of the seminar and search for intense emotional experiences and new beginnings by physically being within a Jewish majority society, they become hyperfocused on those Jews who fit their preformed stereotype. Despite the teachers' exposure to Jewish staff, lecturers, tour guides, and bus drivers, they ascribe a Jewish identity primarily to those marked by outward religious symbols — an uncanny parallel to the yellow stars (*Judenstern*) which marked Jews in Nazi Germany. This association is particularly discernible following group visits to the Yad Vashem museum, when references are made to ultra-Orthodox Jews in their

distinct religious garments. Even within the Jewish homeland, “folkloric” preconceptions of Jews continue to enable a process of Othering (see Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus, 2017 for Othering as a subtle form and expression of anti-Semitic structures in Germany) as revealed by Lara’s (40s) remark after the museum visit during the group reflection: “It was particularly moving for me to see many Orthodox Jews in the museum. That would usually not happen to me in a museum, not in Dachau.” The presence of visibly identifiable Jews — tangible relics of the shtetl who function as focal points of the Yad Vashem pilgrimage — enhances the authenticity of the site. Similarly, Jan (50s) expressed that he “found it very positive, to be there inside together with Jews and to see the children born afterwards.” With Jews and their offspring positioned as sacred objects within the museum space, the encounter helps to mitigate German teachers’ guilt as they observe firsthand that Jewish life still thrives despite Nazi attempts at annihilation.

Although some of the German teachers explicitly expressed that they carry an inherited shame with them on excursions beyond the Yad Vashem campus, such feelings are not validated by the Jewish Israelis whom they encounter. Teachers in all groups voiced a certain astonishment about the open, positive reactions they experienced when interacting with Israelis at the *shuk* or in the Old City during their leisure time. “I was surprised by this friendliness, that we as Germans are included here without anger or rage,” Gaby commented in the seminar feedback round. Mira (50s) was equally amazed: “The open encounters, I never felt resentment anywhere because we are a German group, that surprised me.” Since the German teachers engage in an Othering of Jews in German space, they presumed that they themselves would be reduced to members of the perpetrator society by Israelis in Jewish space. When the participants discover that this reverse-Othering never materializes, their expression of surprise translates to a sense of comfort that releases them from their shame.

Teachers expressed further shock when they stumbled upon Jews who do not quite fit those stereotypes which have been constructed as a result of Jewish invisibility in Germany. Again and again, when asked what impressed them about the trip by a speaker at the follow up-meeting back in Germany, several participants brought up the “rabbis with the techno-van” as “the most crazy experience there.” Here the teachers refer to an ultra-Orthodox sect colloquially known as the Na Nachs,<sup>13</sup> known for driving around Israeli cities in colorful, graffiti-covered vans while blasting religious-techno music from large speakers mounted onto the roof. When the van stops at red traffic lights, the Na Nachs — donning traditional beards, peyot (sidelocks), and characteristic white knitted kippot (skullcaps) — jump out and dance, bringing a spontaneous, rave-like party to the middle of the intersection, where random passersby often join in the raucous celebration. Bert reminisced about dancing in the streets of Jerusalem at one o'clock in the morning: “That was a day, from the Final Solution up to the rabbi with the techno-van. Who would have thought that the religious Jews would be there with that techno-van on the way? That was hot.” While they may bear many of those visible religious symbols corresponding to the German stereotypes, the Na Nachs and their joyful exuberance catch the participants, still wallowing in the collective guilt of the perpetrator society following the day's lecture on the Final Solution, off guard. In this moment, as perpetrator and victim collectives frolic wildly together in the streets of the Jewish homeland, the dance assumes the role of a purgative ritual, the climax of the pilgrimage through which German guilt is seemingly absolved.

13 | A subgroup of Bratslav Hassidim who follow the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, a rabbi who lived in nineteenth century Ukraine. Their core belief is that spreading joy is a mitzvah, or commandment, which will help to usher the coming of the Messiah.



When German teachers experience daily Jewish life in Israel, their positive encounters with Jews offer a much sought-after cathartic relief. Episodes in which German teachers perceive a connection between themselves and Jews — such as when dancing together with the Na Nachs — trigger feelings of relief, especially against the background of the tension which teachers articulate in the seminar when it comes to conflicting narratives of involvement and perpetratorship. As Karla (40s) put it: “Especially as a German, I found it comforting to know that this place [i.e., Israel] now exists for the people, despite all the difficulties we know about.” Seeing Jews touring the museum, welcoming German tourists with open arms, and dancing in the streets, conveys a sense of normalcy which sets the teachers at ease. In fact, Berta summarized a key takeaway of the trip as “I learned here that Jews are normal people.” Given that Jewish “normality” is not recognized in Germany, it is only when the teachers leave the German context and travel to Israel that they can see the Jewish “Others” as “normal.” And it is through this new understanding of Jewish “normality” that some of the teachers’ burden of blurred emotional heritage is lifted.

**When German teachers experience daily Jewish life in Israel, their positive encounters with Jews offer a much sought-after cathartic relief.**

## 4.10 Face-to-Face with Survivors

Today, one of the most pressing and critically debated pedagogical questions concerning the teaching of the Shoah is how to prepare teachers when witnesses, nearing the end of their life spans, are no longer present (Kaiser, 2018). Noomi posed this question to teachers in the workshop she was leading before the much anticipated survivor encounter: "A main question at Yad Vashem is what it will look like if you can no longer interview contemporary witnesses?" Three of the four observed groups engaged in a survivor encounter (see Table 5 in the Appendix), each consisting of three parts: a preparatory workshop, the actual meeting, and a reflection with the teachers and seminar leader. During the preparatory workshops, German teachers often expressed high expectations for the encounter related to this generational question. According to Katharina, the fact that "for students it [i.e., the Nazi era] is so far away, not tangible," points to the importance of survivor meetings for reaching students. In addition to their students, some teachers, such as Clemens, also feel a lack of connection to the generation of National Socialism: "I also have no personal connection. Contact with survivors is the only way without personal connections." Bearing the responsibility for transmitting authentic memories to their students, the teachers themselves seek an emotional connection with a survivor. "Biographies make it more emotional," Moritz claimed, and Lore confirmed, "That's also the goal in the school, that the students connect." Playing the role of "students" in the seminar, the German teachers hope for an emotional experience that they can subsequently transfer to their pupils.

Although teachers embark on the Yad Vashem pilgrimage with expectations of an emotional connection, Leah emphasized during a preparatory workshop that this is not the purpose of working with survivors from the perspective of the German Desk: "It is about stimulating a process of self-reflection, and not going into a consumption attitude, an expectation. ...We are the listeners, there is a mutual relationship between us and the survivors." Yet, despite Leah's words of caution, the teachers' quest for connection ultimately commodifies the survivor encounter.

Teachers often posed questions to survivors regarding their present feelings toward the German people, culture, and language, as if searching for threads to establish the connection. For example, Bert asked Ofra (survivor), "Your children and grandchildren, how would you describe their relationship to Germany, is that something special because of the family history?" and Merle (20s) inquired, "Are there customs, cultural aspects, foods that your parents took away from Germany?" Ofra's response that "sometimes I do things my grandmother asked, sometimes I make apricot dumplings" elicited laughter and expressions of joy from the teachers. Juxtaposed with the teachers' inherited guilt, Ofra's inherited recipe for a classic German dish provides the participants with the desired emotional connection as they see reflections of themselves within the survivor and her family. Mattis (30s) even compared the survivor meeting to "talking with grandma." Moreover, the teachers' laughter indicates a sense of relief, as Ofra's preparation of apricot dumplings seemingly signifies a lack of resentment towards German culture, and by extension, the German people.

While Leah warned her group that "sometimes survivors do not meet expectations," Lydia reflected afterwards that she nevertheless "stumbled into the trap of expectation." This "trap of expectation" is rooted in current German pedagogical discourse, which calls for lessons on the Shoah to evoke specific emotions (Brauer, 2019). Given that emotions are closely connected with teacher family biographies, this expectation is magnified during meetings with a survivor, who may resemble one's "grandma" with regard to her biological age. As a result, German teachers expressed disillusionment when their emotional expectations for the survivor meeting were not fulfilled. Following what teachers perceived as an unemotional encounter with Peter (survivor), who delivered a traditional lecture with PowerPoint slides, multiple teachers conveyed their disappointment during the reflection session:

Rita:

*I had to let go of expectations, I thought I was getting a maudlin anecdote, I presumed.*

Jutta:

*He did not represent the victim.*

Christian (60s):

*I have seen women twice as contemporary witnesses with a much more emotional note.*

Johanna (30s):

*I have to free myself from expectations. They were met to 0.0%.*

Anticipating a tearful encounter, the teachers' hope for an emotional connection is unfulfilled by Peter's matter-of-fact style of presentation. From the participants' perspective, this lack of emotion diminished the authenticity of the encounter, which is long-awaited as a highlight of the Yad Vashem pilgrimage.

Beyond the search for an emotional connection, Leah stated in a narrative interview that she "always feels that the German teachers are longing for forgiveness when they meet survivors." When survivors, such as Peter, are not perceived to "represent the victim," it is no longer possible for the German participants to imagine the encounter as capable of bestowing forgiveness. But, in those cases in which the survivor fits the participants' conception of "the victim," such as Josefa, the encounter has the potential to provide the coveted catharsis. At the end of Josefa's talk she offered hugs to the teachers, who eagerly accepted the invitation to experience a tangible connection. As the diminutive figure of Josefa wrapped her arms around the smiling German teachers who towered above her, she planted kisses onto each of their cheeks.

Overwhelmed with emotion, some teachers whispered words of gratitude (e.g., “Thank you, that was so so so nice,” “That was so beautiful.”), while others wiped tears from their eyes as they made physical contact with an authentic survivor — the holy grail of their secular pilgrimage. The group posed for a collective photograph with Josefa to serve as proof of this magical moment in which the survivor and the representatives of the perpetrator collective finally embraced. “She forgave us,” proclaimed Frauke during the reflection session.

The German teachers evaluate the success of a survivor encounter based on feelings of authenticity and “forgiveness,” as victims appear to expunge the guilty charge imparted upon members of the perpetrator collective. However, this fixation on forgiveness belies those explicit educational goals for survivor encounters with students in Germany, which the teachers had discussed in the preparatory workshop just moments before meeting Josefa.

Furthermore, it contradicts the objectives of these encounters in the eyes of Yad Vashem’s German Desk and those of the invited survivors. For example, Josefa understands the telling of her story as a “duty,” not in the name of reconciliation, but for the sake of remembrance and for conveying a humanistic message to younger generations. Similarly, Ofra answered, “I think it’s important for groups to know” when asked why she chooses to speak at Yad Vashem, echoing Leah’s reference to the participants as “listeners” during the preparatory workshop. When the teachers converged on Josefa following her lecture, Leah expressed her dismay by refusing to be included in the photograph, which she later characterized as a “trophy” when interviewed. But for the German teachers, their pilgrimage to Yad Vashem is not about listening; it is about feeling. The “trophy” photograph with the survivor memorializes this emotion-filled moment of perpetrator–victim connection as a palpable piece of evidence which may help the teachers to share this feeling with students and colleagues upon their return to Germany.

**The German teachers evaluate the success of a survivor encounter based on feelings of authenticity and “forgiveness,” as victims appear to expunge the guilty charge imparted upon members of the perpetrator collective.**

## 4.11 New Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict


While the official purpose of German teacher group visits to Israel is their participation in the Yad Vashem seminar, for many teachers there is an additional motive: an underlying interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, during a group discussion before the seminar, Jan stated that for him, a key goal of the trip was “to understand the country a little better, also with its conflicts.” In light of high teacher interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the German Desk offers the German groups two sessions related to this topic, typically a lecture by a journalist and a discussion panel with Palestinian and Jewish educators. Additional programming on the conflict is sometimes organized at the discretion of the individual state ministries of education and the group coordinators. According to its coordinators, one ministry actually conditions its funding of the trip on the basis that the program includes significant exposure to the Palestinian perspective. Consequently, programs on the conflict, as well as guided tours in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, end up competing with programs on the Shoah for the participants' time and attention. These two parallel programs sometimes cause palpable tensions. For example, Saskia (30s) commented to one researcher that she “thought they [i.e., Yad Vashem] don't like to see that, something about the Palestinians,” a suspicion that was declared unfounded by a German Desk employee when asked about it. However, Leah expressed frustration when her group returned too late from such experiences, taking seminar time away from those Yad Vashem sessions funded by Shoah foundations.

Aside from any ministry-specific requirements, teachers' high interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reflects multiple, yet interrelated factors, including a desire to better teach the subject in schools, to deal with Israel-related anti-Semitism among Muslim students, and to reconcile an apparent contradiction as the Jewish victims now oppress the Palestinian population. Maria (50s), a program coordinator, emphasized that it is important to “introduce them [i.e., students] to the topic because the Middle East conflict is almost not taught in

class, it is also not written into the school curricula." She added, "Without knowing the Middle East conflict, one can also not understand the current Middle East policy at all, and the topic of the Holocaust, of course, the topic of National Socialism. Of course we should give it additional priority." German teachers, such as Maria, tend to engage in such chains of association, in which they instinctively link the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the Shoah and anti-Semitism, but without making a clear argument.

In particular, teachers face tough questions from students about the ostensible perpetrator-victim role-reversal as Jews, conflated with Israelis, are accused of victimizing the Palestinians. Clemens described his students' reactions: "When I said that I was going here [i.e., to Israel], the reaction came, 'They do the same thing. They starve the Palestinians [and] lock them up.' ...What can I say without much background knowledge?" Daniela's students also questioned her visit to Israel, telling her, "They oppress the Palestinians, that is also an apartheid state and so on." Daniela admitted, "I'm also searching for an answer. How do I answer that appropriately? ...In a state in which the Shoah is such a central topic, how can I explain that there is also exclusion and discrimination?"

Not only do students draw comparisons between the Shoah and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but sometimes the teachers themselves are troubled by this seeming contradiction. At the preparatory meeting, Vanessa asserted that "they [i.e., the Jews] learned nothing" and "do exactly the same." The Yad Vashem staff are acutely aware of the development of this form of a perpetrator-victim reversal, which according to Tamar, is exacerbated when the groups tour locations in the West Bank:




*They often go to Ramallah, to Bethlehem. ...Then it creates more tension, because of course it creates curiosity and I can definitely understand it. I mean, from one side we are talking about genocide and [Jewish] oppression and how horrible it is. And some people would say, "How can you talk about these things, if you're doing the exact same thing?"*

Tamar stressed, however, that the German Desk staff hope that the teachers "understand, first of all, that it's completely incomparable, incomparable."

Tamar's repetition of the word "incomparable" underscores Yad Vashem's Jewish perspective and its emphasis on the Shoah as a unique historical event.

Reflecting on guided group tours within Israel and the West Bank, several German teachers reminisced about the authenticity of their experiences, having now been exposed to "both sides." In the words of Jan:



*I think it's always different when you read about things than when you personally see and understand them. When we were up there on the Golan Heights and you see there is Syria and there is Lebanon and there runs this border, and then you also hear how this army has to keep an eye on it ...now I am much more strongly in favor of the Israeli side. Now I'm curious how it will be when we hear the Palestinian side. ...You have to go on site and talk to people and see and experience it for yourself.*

These experiences often expose teachers to new narratives, which may not easily fit into the dichotomy of Israeli oppression and Palestinian victimization



with which they are familiar from the media. Recalling the group's memorable encounter in a Jericho parking lot, where teachers enthusiastically bought fresh squeezed pomegranate juice and took photographs with camels and smiling local vendors, Lydia described driving "through the West Bank that you only know from the news and having a completely different picture of it." As several teachers sat in the hotel lobby and reflected on the day's events, Tanja exclaimed that "the best thing was the T-shirt seller" in Jerusalem's Old City marketplace (the *souk*), where Arab shopkeepers peddle souvenirs bearing pro-Israel and pro-Palestine messages side-by-side. Another teacher, Lena (50s), mentioned she was "surprised to see a Palestinian in Yad Vashem," referring to the Palestinian educator invited to speak at one session organized by the German Desk. These examples reveal the intrigue with which German teachers process discrepant narratives about the conflict. Whether or not such staged situations involving Israeli tour guides, Arab souvenir vendors, or a Palestinian speaker selected by Yad Vashem can be considered to represent truly authentic perspectives, German teachers claim they emerge from these experiences with a "differentiated view of Israel" (Max) or a "more cosmopolitan feeling" (Saskia).

Teachers describe this experience of perceived authenticity vis-à-vis the conflict as one of the primary take-aways of the Yad Vashem seminar. Merle asserted, "When I was here, I can convey that [i.e., the Middle East conflict] to the students better." When asked to reflect on their Israel visit during post-seminar meetings back in Germany, among the written teacher responses included an awareness of the "complexity of the conflict," as well as an "increased interest in the Muslim side." Lydia even organized a cooperative project between her school and a pro-Palestinian organization. When presenting her project during the follow-up meeting, she added that she was asking herself, "What does it mean that I learned a whole week about the Shoah at Yad Vashem, and the first action I am taking back home is to organize a meeting for German students with Palestinian activists?" It is clear that teachers are just as occupied with the search for an "authentic" experience through encounters with Israelis and Palestinians, as they are with their quest to improve Holocaust education in Germany.

## 4.12 The Return Home: Reflections on an Authentic Experience

Circling back to the German teachers' highly personal emotional expectations of the Yad Vashem pilgrimage with which we opened this ethnography, our findings suggest these expectations are largely fulfilled, and in some cases, even surpassed. Despite readying herself for the visit, Rebecca (50s) expressed surprise "that it emotionally grabbed" her. She continued, "I'm actually dealing with the subject and I was able to go in there prepared. I've read a lot and so on, and that it grabbed me like that, I didn't expect that." Likewise, Torben (40), specifically referring to the children's monument, contended that it "can't compete with any film, this place was incredible because of its emotionality." For these teachers, neither books nor films can capture the emotionality of the pilgrimage experience itself. For many participants, their emotional reactions are caught-up in their perception of Yad Vashem as an authentic site. Reflecting on the previous day's museum tour, Uli expressed, "I couldn't say anything yesterday because it touched me so much. ...I was in Auschwitz and stood there and nothing happened, and that really touched me here yesterday." Others (see Cohen, 2011; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010) have documented similar remarks among European visitors to Yad Vashem, in which the Israeli memorial is experienced as more authentic and more emotional than the sites of the horrific crimes themselves.

Upon their return to Germany, teachers from all four groups reminisced about the Israel journey and the Yad Vashem seminar with fervor, using adjectives such as "intense," "amazing," "awesome," "overwhelming," "impressive," and "emotion-ally gripping" to describe the experience. During a post-trip interview, Monika expressed her feelings, also shared by her hotel roommate:


*I was enthusiastic about Jerusalem. I'm still very emotional and touched when I think about all we heard and learned at Yad Vashem. ...We both cannot believe that we were there, and we are so happy we were there. It really won a part of my heart.*

Such passionate recollections of the journey conjure the Turnerian paradigm of pilgrimage, as a “movement from a mundane center to a sacred periphery which suddenly, transiently, becomes central for the individual, as an *axis mundi* of his faith” (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 34). Many participants, such as Henning, mentioned an incessant desire to share their transformative voyage with family, friends, and colleagues: “I’m talking a lot about the trip and the seminar, telling a lot of people about it. It is a beautiful memory. ...I also recommended it to my colleagues. Apply!” Yet at the same time, like awe-struck pilgrims, some participants have difficulty putting the experience into words. As Tanja explained, “Every time when someone asked [about the trip] I had to wait a second and consider, ‘Where do I start? What will I tell?’”

Similar to Turnerian pilgrimage narratives, German teachers’ enthusiastic accounts of the Israel trip “stress the opposition between social life as it is lived in localized, relatively stable structured systems of social relations” — in this case that of post-Shoah Germany — “and the total process of pilgrimage” (Turner, 1973, p. 192). One example of such opposition is Yad Vashem’s focus on Jewish biographies and life before and after the Shoah, in contrast to an inherited, routinized German memorial culture emphasizing a perpetrator perspective. Niklas praised the seminar, declaring it enabled him “to get to know the perspective of those affected” and “to get away from our German perspective. ...There was a story before the Holocaust with a normality.” Likewise, Moritz learned to question his teaching practices: “What am I doing here? Is it from the victim’s or the perpetrator’s perspective?” Beyond simply being impressed with the quality of Yad Vashem’s lectures and material, teachers such as Niklas and Moritz have experienced an upheaval of taken-for-granted perpetrator-centered pedagogical practices.

Such a destructuring of narratives occurs not only in relation to the topic of National Socialism and Holocaust education, but extends to typical German preconceptions about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, as well. On account of

the trip, Max reported developing a deeper, more intricate understanding of the conflict than that which is presented in the German media: "For years I've been busy with the Middle East conflict. ...And there I really understood that it is highly complex and one cannot take a one-sided position." A similar shift in attitude and breaking of stereotypes is described by Theresa (40s):



*I have a critical view of Israeli politics. ...On the other hand, I already notice that this image one has of Israel... that changes again when one is actually in Israel, [when you see] how small and vulnerable this country is. Israel is a country that I have in my heart.*


It is striking that Theresa used the same figurative language as Monika, with both participants describing an emotional turn in which Israel has found space in their hearts. According to Turner and Turner (1978), the actual power of a pilgrimage journey lies in such an "inward movement of the heart" that cannot be achieved at home (p. 8). For East German teachers in particular, this "inward movement of the heart" is mediated, in part, by their perception of a peaceful coexistence of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity in Jerusalem. Reflecting the history of the GDR and its explicitly secular positioning, East German groups are enamored of religion's overt presence in the Israeli public sphere. From her tourist-pilgrim perspective, Monika reveled in "the positive experience of seeing that the three religions live together there... and in peace... people just get along with each other." When German teachers walk the cobbled streets of the Old City and observe passersby donning kippot, crosses, and hijabs, while the call of muezzin and clanging of church bells waft through the air, media-perpetuated expectations of rampant hostility give way to illusions of harmony.

Outward perceptions of harmonious camaraderie are simultaneously reflected inward as a sense of Turnerian *communitas* — a spontaneous unity, a "fellowship with like-minded souls" (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 31) — develops among the

German teacher groups. Max reflected on the close bond that formed between the seminar participants: "I enjoyed that we quickly became a small internal group of teachers, with a good rapport among each other." During a discussion at a follow-up meeting, Tanja shared that after returning to everyday life in Germany, she has felt "a bit left alone," and expressed relief at the chance to reconnect with her fellow participants "just to talk... knowing everyone has experienced the same thing." Tanja described the Israel trip as a communal experience that separates her emotionally from those who have not yet embarked on the journey. Having forged tight-knit connections among traveling companions, before the end of the meeting, the teachers in this group ended up discussing how they might arrange future reunions. A phenomenon of long-term ties developing between participants was reported in interviews with trip coordinators, who confirmed that some groups have continued to meet regularly for years after their return from Israel.

Along with newfound peer communities, teachers return home with the hope of achieving a multiplier effect, whereby the inspiration discovered at Yad Vashem may be transferred to those colleagues and students who remained at home. In one group discussion, Saskia mentioned meeting with her school's principal, when "we also considered whether we could somehow present it across the school in other departments." Teachers' eagerness to share their enlightening experience within the school sphere resonates with the expectations of the education ministries to produce a cadre of multipliers through the organization and financing of Israel journeys. Teacher-participants return uplifted, with renewed motivation to teach the Shoah in their own classrooms. "[The seminar] really motivated me, that I should do something about the topic," Martin declared when interviewed after his return to Germany. Armed with books and curricular materials from Yad Vashem (some gifted to participants by the German Desk and others purchased separately at Yad Vashem's bookstore), returning German teachers are initially enthusiastic about the potential contagious power of these souvenirs brought home from the Holy Land. However, while motivated, Emilia (30s)


explained the challenge of integrating these materials into her actual teaching practice:



*I also bought a lot because I actually thought that these are all such interesting materials. ...And then first of all, there was the thought, “What do you actually do with it?” ...When I thought about how I would use it again, that was difficult.*

Caught up in the journey's overwhelming emotions and experience of *communitas* found in Israel, returnees are full of hope and intention, yet may become disoriented as they attempt to reconcile their transformation with the mundane social reality in Germany.

Yad Vashem represents a place that can convey an intense, and even personal, emotional experience for the German teachers. It is these deeply personal experiences — and not those of their parents and grandparents, or those gleaned from books, films, or the media — which teachers hope to pass on to the next generations. Yet Wiebke (40s) grappled with the feasibility of passing on what she has experienced at Yad Vashem to students, as well as to her own children:



*I have three sons between the ages of 15 and 25. I want to come with them and I would recommend everyone to come here. I also came and thought that this is such a dark place, but it is not. My sons have certainly learned a lot at school and in other places, but nothing can be compared to what is here. I'm going home now and asking if we shouldn't go to Israel again because of this emotional approach. Also this beauty of this place, this incredible melancholy. That touched me incredibly. If you can convey a hint of it in school, a lot would be won. You probably can't. You probably just have to come here.*

While the teacher-participants are decidedly transformed by their visit to Yad Vashem, it remains uncertain if, and how, they will successfully transmit the site's authenticity and emotionality to students in accordance with their intentions prior to the Israel journey.

# 5. Summary

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Our findings reveal a complex web of actors — education ministries, German Desk staff, teacher-participants and their students — whose diverse generational orientations, social backgrounds, motivations, and expectations surface over the course of the Yad Vashem seminar. During the five to ten-day trip in Israel, the conflicts, challenges, emotions, and self-reflections which emerged around these actors shed light on the memory of the Shoah and Holocaust education in contemporary Germany. Furthermore, we gained insight into how these actors perceive the past in relation to present-day issues, including the rise of anti-Semitism and the New Right in Germany and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## 5.1 Teacher Motivations and Pedagogical Needs

Despite reports of “Holocaust fatigue” among younger generations of Germans (e.g., Ahlheim & Heger, 2002), teachers from the different groups contested claims that the Holocaust is a topic taught ad nauseam. Over the course of the Yad Vashem seminars, teachers expressed frustration regarding the lack of time allotted to the Shoah in the curriculum, the inadequate supply of teaching materials, and the generational gap between students and teachers. Teachers demonstrated a pressing need for concrete, practical curricula for conveying the Shoah in history lessons, as well as in subjects such as ethics and literature. Often overwhelmed with the task of addressing present anti-Semitic trends, many teachers are motivated to attend the Yad Vashem seminar by the expectation that they will return to Germany better equipped to respond to anti-Semitism within their schools and communities.

In contrast to the official German commemorative culture, mediation of the Shoah in families and educational institutions is often vague and incomplete, according

to interviews with German teacher-participants. German teachers bring an emotional heritage, derived from interpretation patterns of intergenerational narratives to the Yad Vashem seminar, where they yearn for intense emotions and personal connections with the Shoah. Given that generations post-National Socialism often grew up with sketchy outlines of the events handed down in intergenerational dialogues, German teachers seek to compensate for an emotional gap by undertaking the Israel journey. As the teachers reckon with this emotional heritage during the Yad Vashem seminar, they must also reflect on those pedagogical practices through which they convey the Shoah to their students.

We can infer from participants' references to their pupils that emotional heritage influences teacher–student interactions during lessons on the Holocaust. Teachers often expect students to relate emotionally to the Holocaust in the same way that they do, even though today's generation of students in a migration society might reflect on the topic from varied perspectives (see Özyürek, 2018). Teachers gauge high student interest in the Holocaust, but express the challenges of reaching students, particularly those of different religious and social backgrounds, including Muslim, special needs, and vocational students. Not only do some teachers hope to find a cure-all curriculum for anti-Semitism at Yad Vashem, but many also seek to break out of daily routines, in search of emotional experiences with contagious power that can be harnessed in the classroom to bridge generational and social gaps. It is noteworthy that while teachers focus heavily on their impact in their role as educators, as well as on the selection of appropriate curricular materials, they rarely discuss the importance of peer interaction in processes of history education (see Steinebach, 2007).

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## 5.2 Memory Practices: Intergenerational Stability, Reproduction, and Modification of Skewed Narratives

Sketchy family histories, emphasizing relatives' suffering, resistance, and lack of involvement in National Socialism, are evident in the narrative interviews conducted with teacher-participants from West and East Germany born between 1955 and 1993. This phenomenon of an intergenerational transfer of distorted narratives has already been documented in other qualitative and quantitative studies (e.g., Moré 2014; Völter & Rosenthal, 1999; Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2008; Zick, Rees, Papendick & Wäschle, 2020). The novelty of our ethnographic findings, however, lies in the insight that such skewed narratives are also present within a professional group of teachers who deal intensively with the subject of the Shoah and establish high expectations for transferring the lessons of National Socialism to today's students. Furthermore, we find a relative long-term stability of these skewed narratives, which are modified for family members who could not possibly bear responsibility for systematic exclusion, persecution, dispossession, or mass murder. Teachers with parents who were children during the era of National Socialism, and therefore beyond suspicion, continue to follow well-established patterns of self-victimization and cumulative heroization. A strong fear of accusation exists even among the generations whose parents were children during the Shoah, and descendants exert considerable effort to perpetuate a narrative of non-involvement within a dictatorship of consents. This desire for purity and an undamaged identity (Chernivsky, 2017; Messerschmidt, 2018) is likewise reflected in the teachers' search for emotional catharsis as they embark on the Yad Vashem pilgrimage.

**We find a relative long-term stability of these skewed narratives, which are modified for family members who could not possibly bear responsibility for systematic exclusion, persecution, dispossession, or mass murder. Teachers with parents who were children during the era of National Socialism, and therefore beyond suspicion, continue to follow well-established patterns of selfvictimization and cumulative heroization.**

## 5.3 Teaching and Learning about the Shoah from Jewish Perspectives in Israel

For German teachers at Yad Vashem, the social and spatial configuration of the seminar triggers emotions — specifically those associated with personal connections to the perpetrator collective — unlike those generated at European memorials marking sites of perpetration. In light of decades of established commemorative practices in Germany, political debates on anti-Semitism without reference to Jewish perspectives, and biases characterized by “talking about Jews instead of with Jews” (Chernivsky & Wiegemann, 2017, p. 5), teachers find the intensive Yad Vashem seminar an unfamiliar situation, in which they experience the Shoah from a Jewish perspective for the first time surrounded by a Jewish majority society. Yad Vashem’s emphasis on Jewish experiences, victim biographies, wide-ranging German benefit from a dictatorship of consents, and individual choices runs counter to German teachers’ perpetrator-centered perspectives. For the teachers, this pronounced focus on the perspectives of victims and survivors may veil how traces of the Shoah are presently ingrained within European institutions and family biographies of the German majority society. Our observations of survivor encounters and seminar workshops on victim biographies suggest that empathizing with victims is much easier for the teachers than dealing with the decisions of perpetrators (see also Gerson, 2013). Furthermore, the focus on Jewish perspectives can reinforce existing tendencies in post-Shoah society to ignore relatives’ involvement in dictatorship, persecution, and mass murder. This points to a quandary regarding the teaching from Jewish perspectives: victim narratives may invite voyeuristic consumption of trauma rather than a reflective processing of how German learners connect with such stories considering their biographical socialization.

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Incongruities between German and Jewish perspectives are most conspicuous when meeting Holocaust survivors and those preparatory and follow-up discussions which sandwich the encounter. The self-proclaimed obligation of the survivors is to speak for those who did not survive to tell their story, and to enlighten the younger generations to preserve their memories. The German teachers, however, exhibit expectations of emotional relief. While in the seminar discussion teachers critically reflected on how their students often set-up an “expectation trap” when meeting survivors in Germany, teachers in one group acknowledged during the follow-up workshop how they themselves stepped into the trap during the survivor encounter at Yad Vashem. Rather than appreciating the subjective perspective of the survivor, the teachers’ collective focus lingered on the feelings of catharsis generated by their proximity, as Germans, to a living survivor.

Throughout the seminar, German teachers spontaneously link various contemporary social problems with the Holocaust, yet the particularist perspective of Yad Vashem, as a Jewish institution, is that such universalist comparisons gloss over the historical singularity of the Shoah, and therefore must be treated with circumspection. At the same time, given their understanding of anti-Semitism as a “Jewish topic,” teachers hope to find new solutions at Yad Vashem for contemporary anti-Semitism in German schools. However, the German Desk staff do not consider themselves to be pedagogical experts regarding present-day anti-Semitism. Moments of unease during seminar workshops require the German Desk staff to mediate between these opposing social discourses with respect to linking contemporary references with the Shoah. As the German Desk staff react to teachers’ explicitly articulated expectations for tools against anti-Semitism and deeper understandings of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they must also attempt to resolve those contestations which arise when the seminar content spotlights the role of the majority society as perpetrators. Consequently, the staff is challenged to incorporate teachers’ diverse needs and unanticipated reactions with the seminar’s didactic aim of introducing Shoah education from Jewish perspectives.

While the German Desk staff articulate ambivalences with regard to the historical mandate of Yad Vashem to research and convey the Shoah from a solely Jewish perspective, and try to adapt to the needs of participants (through the development of an anti-Semitism workshop, for example), critical questions are raised by the staff regarding how an education for human rights, the fight against contemporary anti-Semitism, and the historical mediation of the Shoah can be combined in pedagogically meaningful ways. Similar challenges and questions also concern pedagogues at European memorial sites (see Thimm, Köbler & Ullrich, 2010): From whose perspective is the Shoah told? How can the emotional challenges and connections to different memory milieus of educators and learners be considered in such educational contexts? How can meaningful references to the present be made? Although the current study cannot answer these questions, our research suggests that learning from Jewish perspectives is not a sure-fire success; rather, it requires engaging in an explicit reflection of one's own reference frame, and those emotions which are triggered in the process of dealing with the Shoah.

## 5.4 An Authentic Israel Experience: Teacher and Education Ministry Expectations

From the perspective of the education ministries, participation in the Yad Vashem seminars is intended to produce a multiplier effect, whereby teacher-participants pass on the knowledge and experiences gained in Israel to colleagues back home. However, interviews with ministry representatives revealed distinct motivations behind the decisions of East and West German states to finance teacher expeditions to Israel. On the one hand, the East German ministry representative associated seminar participation with solving problems in German schools, such as growing teacher despondency given the difficulty of Shoah education within a social context characterized by mounting New Right tendencies. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the West German ministry representative, beyond acquiring new pedagogical tools, the Israel journey is about disrupting established Jewish stereotypes and breaking one-sided narratives through experiencing everyday Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian-Arab cultures.

The high expectations of education ministries and teachers confirms Cohen's (2011) claim that despite its geographical distance from primary sites in Europe, Yad Vashem is perceived as an authentic site for learning about the Shoah on so-called dark pilgrimages. German teachers, many of whom have had limited prior contact with Jews, are motivated to embark on this journey to a distant "center out there" (Turner, 1973) by the desire for an intensely transformative, emotional experience mediated through contact with Jews and Jewish space. Unlike the abundance of primary memorial sites in European locations where the crimes of the Shoah actually took place, only Yad Vashem, uncontaminated by perpetrators, can provide space for the absolution of

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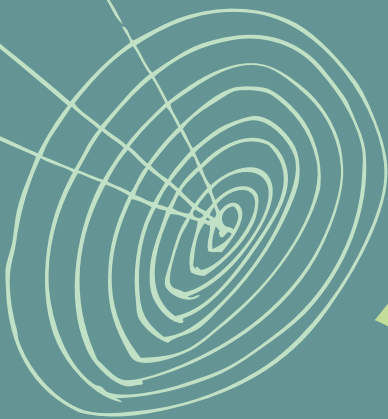
inherited guilt. Yet, throughout the seminar, the teacher-participants are preoccupied with their position as “Germans” in Israel, and are surprised by open encounters and the lack of accusations against them. As German teachers hug Holocaust survivors and dance with religious Jews in the streets of Jerusalem, a much sought-after cathartic relief confirms the authenticity of the experience. Through fulfillment of a secular pilgrimage (e.g., Margry, 2008), whereby living Jewish relics are encountered in a Jewish state, transformed teachers aspire to touch students emotionally upon their return to Germany in an effort to combat anti-Semitism and the New Right.

The German teachers, many of whom have an underlying interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, similarly interpret their brief encounters with Palestinians from a pilgrim-tourist perspective. To classify their experiences, teacher-participants use established concepts and dominant German narratives on the one hand, while on the other hand, provocative moments incite new questions and introduce unexpected narratives which do not correspond with media portrayals of Israeli oppression and Palestinian victimization. Regarding touristic practices and program design, we identify subtle differences between East and West German groups based on field observations and staff interviews. East German groups tend to show greater interest in the varied religious practices and perceived coexistence they come across in Jerusalem, which serves as an intriguing foil to the explicitly secular GDR in which they were socialized. West German groups, however, turn their attention to Middle East politics, and desire a comprehensive program on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (including lectures by Palestinian speakers and visits to the West Bank) alongside the Yad Vashem seminar. Regardless of the exact program design, which varies significantly among the federal states, in retrospect, German teachers describe an experience of perceived authenticity in relation to the conflict as one of the primary take-aways of the Yad Vashem seminar. Upon their return to the classroom, teachers sense that they now have a clearer understanding of what is “really” going on in Israel, and that they can better convey the conflict to their students after having physically been there.



# 6. Conclusion and Outlook

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This project explored ethnographically the question of generational orientations and practices of German teachers in relation to the Shoah and its transmission. This question was examined in the condensed setting of professional development seminars at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Through an in-depth study of the many actors involved (teachers, coordinators, German Desk staff, and education ministries), we documented how and why German teachers, who face a myriad of challenges in teaching the Holocaust, learn about the Shoah on trips to Israel. Over the course of the five to ten-day Israel experience, we chronicled those insights, emotions, conflicts, frustrations, and questions which emerged concerning the memory of the Shoah and Holocaust education in contemporary Germany.

A holistic ethnographic approach, considering many actors of different generations and varied geographical and social contexts, enabled a multi-perspective reconstruction of routine practices, as well as the expectations, challenges, and motives associated with professional development for Holocaust education in Israel. In terms of methodology, the study reveals that an ethnographic approach enables a reconstruction of teacher practices as intergenerational mediators in dealing with the Shoah. Observed teacher practices and recorded narratives outline contradictions and tensions, which reflect the dissonance between family memory and official memorial culture in Germany. Teacher expectations, hinging on generational collective memory and growing anti-Semitism, often conflict with those narratives associated with teaching the Shoah from a Jewish perspective and which form the basis of the Yad Vashem seminar.

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Teachers bring an emotional heritage to the Yad Vashem seminar. The continuity of German narratives of self-victimization and silence on involvement and

perpetratorship reveals that the relevance of generations for the field of Shoah education lies not in vast differences between generations, but in the relative stability of intergenerational transmission. As teachers struggle to reflect on this emotional heritage, they are simultaneously tasked with conceptualizing how they act as mediators of intergenerational traditions. Through fulfillment of a secular pilgrimage to Yad Vashem, German teachers search for emotional catharsis and personal connections to the Shoah, as well as to the Middle East conflict, which can subsequently be passed on to pupils and colleagues. While German education ministries expect their teachers to undergo such a transformative experience in Israel, questions are raised regarding how experiences can function as sources of reflection and pedagogical inspiration, rather than as events for pure touristic, cultural consumption. Transformed teachers aspire to touch students emotionally upon their return to Germany in an effort to combat anti-Semitism and the New Right. Yet it remains to be seen precisely how one translates the enlightening experiences in Israel beyond the events themselves, and into actual teaching practices. We hope that our study might serve as a springboard for future ethnographic research among students and teachers within German classrooms.

Widening our lens beyond this particular case study of German educators at an Israeli memorial site, our research encourages contemplation on how to best adapt Shoah education to specific target populations and to the needs of today's students and teachers. Recognition of learners' diverse needs, emotional heritages, socio-historical perspectives, and contemporary references ought to be a central goal for those educators and institutions (schools, universities, museums, memorial sites) involved in the development of a Holocaust education for the twenty-first century. Finally, given the significance of emotional encounters uncovered in this study, we urge a careful consideration of how to ensure emotion-laden experiences in educational settings not only remain events, situational memories, or narrative points of reference, but also lead to sustainable didactic processes and reflections.

# **Appendix: Participant Summaries**

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Table 1. Summary of teacher-participants.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Age Range</b> (years of birth)	<b>Number of Participants</b> (female/male)
1 (West German Federal State)	29–65 (1953–1989)	23 (15 f / 8 m)
2 (West German Federal State)	32–61 (1958– 1987)	26 (16 f / 10 m)
3 (West German Federal State)	32–65 (1955– 1987)	21 (15 f / 6 m)
4 (East German Federal State)	27–60 (1960–1993)	18 (14 f / 4 m)
<b>Total</b>	27–65 (1955–1993)	88 (60 f / 28 m)

Table 2. Teachers (and ages) quoted in the report by group, in alphabetical order.

<b>Group #1</b> (West German State)	<b>Group #2</b> (West German State)	<b>Group #3</b> (West German State)	<b>Group #3</b> (West German State)
Alexandra (20s)	Bert (40s)	Barbara (40s)	Beate (30s)
Anja (40s)	Clara (50s)	Christa (50s)	Berta (50s)
Bernd (60s)	Florian (40s)	Emilia (30s)	Frauke (50s)
Christian (60s)	Gaby (50s)	Heinrich (50s)	Henning (50s)
Claudia (40s)	Gudrun (50s)	Martin (50s)	Lore (50s)
Clemens (30s)	Jan (50s)	Niklas (40s)	Maren (20s)
Daniela (50s)	Karla (40s)	Rebecca (50s)	Max (30s)
Gabriel (50s)	Lara (40s)	Theresa (40s)	Monika (50s)
Gerda (50s)	Lena (50s)	Torben (40s)	Moritz (40s)
Horst (50s)	Lydia (30s)	Vanessa (50s)	Selvi (20s)
Johanna (30s)	Maria (50s)	Wiebke (40s)	Winfried (50s)
Jutta (40s)	Marita (50s)		
Katharina (30s)	Mattis (30s)		
Reiner (50s)	Merle (20s)		
Rita (40s)	Mira (50s)		
Thomas (50s)	Mirco (30s)		
	Saskia (30s)		
	Tanja (40s)		
	Uli (30s)		
	Walter (50s)		
	Werner (50s)		

Table 3. Interviewed ministry representatives.

<b>Ministry Representative</b>	<b>East/West German Federal State</b>
Alex	West German Federal State
Dominique	East German Federal State

Table 4. Permanent German Desk staff (during the observation period) in alphabetical order.

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Number of Staff (female/male)</b>
Ben	27–55 years old	5–8
Dana		(4–7 f / 1 m)
Leah		
Lotta		
Noomi		
Ronit		
Sina		
Tamar		

Table 5. Holocaust survivors from group encounters.

<b>Survivor</b>	<b>Group</b>
Peter	Group 1
Ofra	Group 2
Josefa	Group 4

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