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## **Holocaust education and human rights. Holocaust discussions in social science textbooks worldwide, 1970-2008**

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## Holocaust education and human rights: Holocaust discussions in social science textbooks worldwide, 1970–2008<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

This paper examines discussions of the Holocaust in 465 secondary school social science textbooks (history, civics, and social studies) from 69 countries published between 1970 and 2008. It finds that textbooks from Western countries are more likely to discuss the Holocaust early on, but the rate is increasing in other regions of the world. Moreover, these discussions are increasingly framed in terms of a universal violation of human rights. Today, over half of Holocaust discussions in textbooks use the language of human rights or a crime against humanity. I argue the shift towards more abstract discourse depicting some events as culturally relevant worldwide reflects the construction of a globalized culture and society.

Holocaust education is an emotionally and politically charged issue worldwide. The historical legacy of anti-Semitism, on-going conflict between Israel and Palestine, general unrest in the Middle East, and the resurgence of neo-Nazism and right-wing extremism in Europe compound sensitivity of teaching about this genocide. As a result, many may not feel well equipped to handle the subject and avoid teaching it entirely, while others advocate for education about the Holocaust as an integral part of schooling. Among the proponents of Holocaust education, there are two main views. One promotes a conceptualization of the Holocaust as historical knowledge embedded in a particular time and place. Another conception emphasizes the universal lessons about human rights that can be taught using the Holocaust. Despite the divided normative stances on whether to teach about the Holocaust and whether it should be framed as human rights, we have little baseline knowledge about cross-national and longitudinal trends: How many countries intend to include a discus-

sion of the Holocaust in their curriculum? Do they depict it in historical or human rights terms?

This paper provides a worldwide overview of trends in Holocaust education using a unique dataset constructed through a content analysis of 465 high school history, civics, and social studies textbooks from 69 countries published between 1970 and 2008. The research addresses two questions: (1) What is the prevalence of Holocaust education in textbooks from countries around the world between 1970 and 2008? (2) To what extent is the Holocaust framed in terms of universal human rights in textbooks over time? To address these questions this paper describes the trends in discussions of the Holocaust in textbooks around the world over time in all regions of the world, and examines whether the universal language of human rights is used when discussing the Holocaust.

In what follows I first discuss the rise of Holocaust education in society and outline the two main conceptual understandings of the Holocaust – as history and human rights – in more detail. The next section outlines the theoretical perspective that underpins this study. Then I describe the data and measures and report descriptive findings. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for a broader sociological understanding of social science instruction and the place of the Holocaust within it.

## The emergence of Holocaust education

For several decades following World War II there was a lack of public awareness and education about the Holocaust in North America and Europe (Short & Reed, 2004). Existing studies indicate that it was not until the 1970s that the Holocaust emerged as a topic in school curricula in Western countries, primarily in the US, Canada, Germany, and the UK (Fallace, 2008; Rathenow, 2000, 2004; Keren, 2004). The Holocaust became increasingly visible in society and schools subsequent to a number of key events. Media attention around the world spiked with the apprehension and subsequent trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. This, along with the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and neighboring Arab nations, heightened awareness of Israel and led to increased visibility of Holocaust survivors. In the US, the 1993 release of Hollywood blockbuster *Schindler's List*, the opening of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and the development of a Holocaust curriculum by the non-profit group, Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO), increased the prominence of the Holocaust, instituting Holocaust remembrance as an integral part of American culture (Fallace, 2008). As the Holocaust became more important within mainstream culture, Holocaust education

became routine in the countries of Western Europe and North America by the early 1990s.

Globally, international organizations, both inter-governmental and non-governmental, have launched programs that reflect a view of the Holocaust as having relevance to countries worldwide. For example, the UN General Assembly designated an International Holocaust Remembrance Day starting in 1995. In 2000 the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust drew representatives from 46 nations to discuss education about and remembrance of the Holocaust; they included heads of state, diplomats, NGOs, religious leaders, academics, and survivors (Kroh, 2008). The non-profit organization FHAO also contributes to the spread Holocaust education worldwide. It reaches nearly two million students and 29,000 educators per year, and has programs in the US, Canada, Northern Ireland, Israel, Rwanda, South Africa, and China (FHAO, 2012).

## Conceptions of the Holocaust

The Holocaust was initially treated primarily as a historical event central to the moral narrative of the Western world. This view is best described by Maier (2000, p. 826), who argues that one account of the Holocaust is a Eurocentric story focusing “on the Holocaust ... political killing as the culminating historical experience of the century”. Gregory (2000, p. 52) also holds this perspective, claiming the Holocaust is “the most important single event of the twentieth century”. This historical view of the Holocaust extends to pedagogical strategies in the classroom. Some argue that the purpose of teaching about the Holocaust should be to teach students to become historians rather than to reduce incidents of racism and to prevent future atrocities (Kinloch, 2001). In this view, the generalizability of civic and moral lessons that can be learned from the Holocaust is questioned because of the extremity of the event (Novick, 1999). In other words, moral lessons of the Holocaust should not be abstracted globally because it cannot be understood outside of the specific confluence of circumstances that created it. One concern proponents of this view put forth is that if the Holocaust is used as a case study to teach, for example, about racism or stereotyping more generally, it mistakenly obscures the institutionalized nature of state-sponsored genocide. Further, there are many examples of racism that do not lead to genocide, and it is a mistake to conflate the causes and consequences of unique instances of violence and discrimination.

A contrasting perspective conceptualizes the Holocaust as having universal moral relevance and value for civic and citizenship education in general. Here, the emphasis is on the rise of the Holocaust as a global cultural symbol of evil (Alexander, 2009). Levy and Sznajder (2002) describe this process as part of the

formation of a “cosmopolitan memory,” and argue that “memories of the Holocaust facilitate the formation of transnational memory cultures, which in turn, have the potential to become the cultural foundation for global human rights politics” (p. 88). Similarly, Dunne and Wheeler (2002) characterize the experience of the Holocaust as directly leading to the establishment of an international human rights regime. Maier (2000) argues that, in light of growing recognition of other atrocities committed worldwide, such as in Bosnia or Rwanda, it is overly narrow to emphasize the uniqueness of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust relative to other human tragedies. Instead, he asserts, the Western narrative, and the Holocaust, have lost their dominance as the central moral story of the twentieth century, replaced by an emphasis on the legacy of global inequality left by colonization and deepened by economic globalization. Whereas the historical view of the Holocaust is linked to (primarily Western) history, the human rights view is tied to the depiction of global moral lessons, especially notions of universal justice for all humans. In education, Short and Reed (2004) view the purpose of studying the Holocaust as preventing future human rights violations. Human atrocities including the Holocaust can be used to draw general lessons across space and time. According to Salmons (2003, p. 139), “a key motivation for teaching about the Holocaust is that it can sensitize young people to examples of injustice, persecution, racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred in the world today”.

### Depictions of the Holocaust in textbooks

The question of whether it is normatively better to conceptualize the Holocaust in embedded historical or universal human rights terms is controversial (see, for example, the debates in Alexander, Jay, Gisen, Manne & Rothenberg, 2009). But regardless of one’s philosophical stance on whether the Holocaust should be taught as an historical event versus an example of human rights, it is clear that both forms enter the intended curricula. Looking directly at textbooks, one finds many examples of historical and human rights conceptions of the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> For instance, a tenth-grade history textbook from India (Dev & Dev, 1995) provides a map of Europe marking all the concentration camps and states, “concentration camps were set up and anti-fascists and Jews were sent there and many of them were killed” (p. 132). Similarly, a US history textbook, *Our Land, Our Time: A History of the United States from 1865*, gives this relatively factual account of the Holocaust:

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

The discourse is morally charged, using strong language such as ‘murdered’ and ‘stripped of civil rights’, but the Holocaust is presented as an embedded historical event that took place in Germany and neighboring countries. These books contain no explicit conceptualization of the Holocaust as a violation of universal principles of human rights or crime against humanity, nor are there any direct connections to global implications for proper civic behavior.

Shifting to universal conceptions of the Holocaust, a book for senior secondary students in Malawi, *Social and Development Studies*, explicitly links the Holocaust to global human rights principles (Fabiano & Maganga, 2002). In a chapter titled ‘Social and ethical values for international life’, the authors state:

Closely connected to the idea of universal human rights is the idea that all people are equal, regardless of their race or ethnic group ... You have seen in this course some of the effects of racism. You have seen how it became a system of government in apartheid South Africa; you have seen how the Nazis of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s had such a strong belief in their racial superiority that they carried out a policy of genocide against the Jews. What is important to remember is international reactions to these events. South Africa was isolated from the rest of the world because of its racist policies. A war was fought throughout the world to defeat the forces of Nazism (Fabiano & Maganga, 2002, pp. 109–110).

In this Malawian book the Holocaust is presented as parallel to other violations of international norms: apartheid in South Africa, the caste system in India, and racism in the United States. It is an example of a vicious ethnic conflict that violates the principles of the international community. All these negative phenomena are depicted as global aberrations for which the perpetrators are brought to justice by the international community. A history textbook currently used for grade 11 in South Africa also ties the Holocaust directly to human rights. It says,

The Holocaust and other atrocities during the war led to a reaction against ‘Scientific Racism’, Social Darwinism, and eugenics. After the war there was a greater awareness of the need to protect human rights (Bottaro, Visser & Worden, 2009, p. 265).

The authors go on to link the post-World War II reaction to international social movements against racism, including the civil rights movement and anti-apartheid movement. When discussed as a matter of history, the Holocaust is presented as important for students to know about because it is a central moral event in the Western story. But when linked to human rights, the Holocaust is one instance of globally unacceptable behavior, important for teaching universally-relevant lessons in tolerance and peace.

## Theory and arguments

The goal of this study is not to take sides in the debate over whether the Holocaust ought to be taught in terms of history or human rights, but rather to contribute to the discussion by providing initial empirical evidence of cross-national trends in Holocaust education over time. There are numerous possibilities as to what the extent and nature of Holocaust discourse in textbooks around the world might consist of. It might be avoided in most places other than Europe and North America. It might be discussed more as a historical fact in countries most directly influenced by the Holocaust and more abstractly in those less directly influenced. And it could be increasing or decreasing over time. This study will provide insight into these trends.

The theoretical lens guiding this research starts from the observation that, particularly since World War II, many of the world's key actors, especially nation-states, behave as though many aspects of social and cultural life are governed by a set of universal principles applicable worldwide (Meyer, Boli, Thomas & Ramirez, 1997). The emergence of a world culture results in the convergence of many features of nation-states around the world in the absence of traditional forms of coercion by a powerful nation-state or obvious functionality (*ibid.*). Numerous studies of education in this theoretical tradition show that a surprisingly standard curriculum has emerged worldwide (Meyer, Kamens, Benavot, Cha & Wong, 1992; Meyer, Ramirez & Soysal, 1992). Dubiel (2003) asserts that the Holocaust has become a meta-narrative of evil, pain and suffering – a “symbolic repertoire” that has been embraced globally (p. 61). Similarly, Alexander (2009) describes the social construction of the Holocaust as a free-floating, universal symbol of evil. This paper argues that Holocaust discourse is likely to be increasing over time in more and more countries, and framed in the universal discourse of human rights, as it evolves into a global symbol of evil. This view is captured in the opening speech at the Stockholm Forum, given by Professor Yehuda Bauer, Academic Advisor of the Stockholm Forum conferences (2000):

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

Working from a body of research that shows that education systems reflect global patterns and universal principles, over and above distinctive national histories (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000; Ramirez & Meyer, 2002), I expect to observe systematic changes in Holocaust education. Specifically, as world society expands and the Holocaust becomes a central symbol of the international community, I expect the following changes in education:

- Proposition 1: Textbooks will increasingly mention the Holocaust over time.
- Proposition 2: Discussions of the Holocaust will increasingly appear in textbooks from a range of countries around the world.
- Proposition 3: Discourse about the Holocaust will be increasingly framed in terms of universal human rights.

In sum, this paper argues that the Holocaust has emerged as a symbol of the principles of a world society. As world society expands over time, countries and textbooks are increasingly likely to discuss the Holocaust, and a greater range of countries are likely to include the Holocaust in their curricula. Furthermore, the nature of Holocaust discussion is likely to be shifting towards human rights discourse as it becomes a global symbol of an extreme violation of world cultural norms of progress and justice. The data and methods described in the next section are used to test these propositions.

## Data, measures and analyses

### *Finding books*

One reason for the lack of cross-national, longitudinal research on Holocaust education is the difficulty of obtaining adequate data. For the most part, recommended curricula and usage rates are poorly tracked and recorded over time. Ministry of education reports, such as those found in the International Bureau of Education, sometimes indicate required educational materials (see Benavot & Braslavsky, 2006; Benavot & Amadio, 2005; Meyer, Kamens et al., 1992), but data for early time points are rare and data are available for only a limited number of countries. It is sometimes possible to acquire current lists of approved textbooks, but it is often extremely challenging to purchase complete sets of textbooks even for contemporary periods, and for earlier time decades it is typically not possible. Despite the valuable source of data that textbooks can provide on the intended content of mass schooling, it is difficult to collect books systematically.

The limited availability of curricular data poses a challenge for research on the intended content of education. Often, a researcher can obtain the names of currently approved textbooks and copies of the books, but systematic lists of government-recommended textbooks in earlier periods are almost unheard of and outmoded textbooks are difficult to find. The few textbook collections that exist around the world tend to be limited to particular countries or subject areas. The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, Germany is one outstanding exception. The institute collects social science textbooks from countries around the world and has a library with over 60,000 social science schoolbooks published since World War II. It was founded after the Second World War



with the explicit aim of reforming social science curricula and textbooks to move them away from the nationalism thought to have generated the tragic global conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century.

A multiyear data collection effort by members of Stanford's Workshop in Comparative Sociology (led by John Meyer and Francisco Ramirez) has resulted in 465 systematically coded history, civics, and social studies textbooks for seventy-four countries and territories for the period from 1970 to the present. Data gathering started in 2005 and continued through 2008. Data collection focused on junior and senior secondary texts (i.e., those aimed at grades six through twelve), and efforts began at the Eckert Institute library, with the cooperation of a helpful staff, where I spent one summer analyzing books with translators. Initial sampling focused on finding books from countries that had both history and civics or social studies available at multiple time points (e.g. one history and one civics or social studies text in the 1970s and one of each subject in the 1980s and 1990s), leading to the analysis of over 250 books. Despite the efforts at the institute, European and North American countries were overrepresented. In a second phase of selection, aimed at gathering books from other regions, the research team called on the support of colleagues from around the world to send textbooks from individual countries and purchased textbooks directly through publishers. As a result of this collaboration, the sample size nearly doubled (appendix A provides a list of the countries and books covered by the data set over time).

The coding protocol was developed using standard content analysis procedures (Krippendorff, 2004). It stems from a larger project to measure human rights and diversity rights emphases, as well as other relevant variables such as subject (history, civics, or social studies) and international orientation (Meyer, Bromley & Ramirez, 2010; Bromley, Meyer & Ramirez, 2011). For example, the coding protocol asks whether a book mentions the phrase human rights and, if so, the approximate number of pages dealing with human rights. Another section asks coders whether the book mentions the rights of specific groups including women, ethnic or racial minorities, and indigenous groups. On average, roughly an hour per book was needed to code for the variables of interest.

From the larger project, there are two core measures relevant to this study. First, to capture whether the Holocaust was discussed the coding protocol asked whether the book contained "at least a paragraph" related to the Holocaust. Second, to capture the nature of Holocaust discourse, the coding protocol asked whether the Holocaust was "discussed explicitly as a human rights violation or crime against humanity". Of the 465 books in the sample, 24 % mention the Holocaust (113 books), and 12 % (55 books) talk about the Holocaust using human rights discourse

(appendix B provides a list of countries that have at least one textbook that discusses the Holocaust and the Holocaust as human rights).

Translators were hired to help with coding books in languages that members of the research team did not know. These were most often university students (in Berlin for books analyzed in Germany and at Stanford for books analyzed in the US), found through word of mouth and by placing advertisements on local job boards. In the course of developing the coding scheme and analyzing books, every effort was made to reduce error, including the challenges of translation, by checking interrater reliability, searching out fully bilingual translators (most often native speakers of the textbook language who were pursuing a higher education degree in English), sitting with translators as they coded books to answer questions, and reviewing each coding sheet to check for inconsistencies. Most important, the questions are factual in nature, not relying on the judgment or content knowledge of coders and translators. For instance, coders were instructed not to rely on their opinion in determining whether a discussion of the Holocaust was framed in human rights terms. Instead, they were trained to mark a book as incorporating human rights only if the exact phrase ‘human rights’ or its translation appeared in the text.

The result of this endeavor is a distinct data set, covering a great many more books, countries, and time periods than any previous research, which typically focuses on individual country case studies (see Benavot & Braslavsky, 2006, for examples). I can, thus, make many more comparisons across countries and over time than have previously been possible. A few important caveats should be mentioned. It is not feasible to obtain a comprehensive or random sample of textbooks from each country over time, and it is impossible to know the extent to which each book is used in the classroom or to assess the direct influence of curricula on students. And while my data cover many more countries than any previous data set, they still include less than half of the extant countries of the world and the sample of countries is biased towards the developed world. On one hand, these drawbacks limit the ability to generalize my results, and my findings should be interpreted with caution; on the other hand, the consistent character of my results across different types of countries encourages further study along the lines of this exploratory research.

The method used to analyze the data is descriptive. I examine whether the mean scores on the measures of Holocaust education described above change significantly over time around the world. Means are presented for the whole sample and subsamples representing six world regions, Western Europe and North America (plus Australia and New Zealand), Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Naturally, it is problematic to determine the absolute meaning of regional trends, as countries within regions have unique histories. Checking more nuanced country groupings was

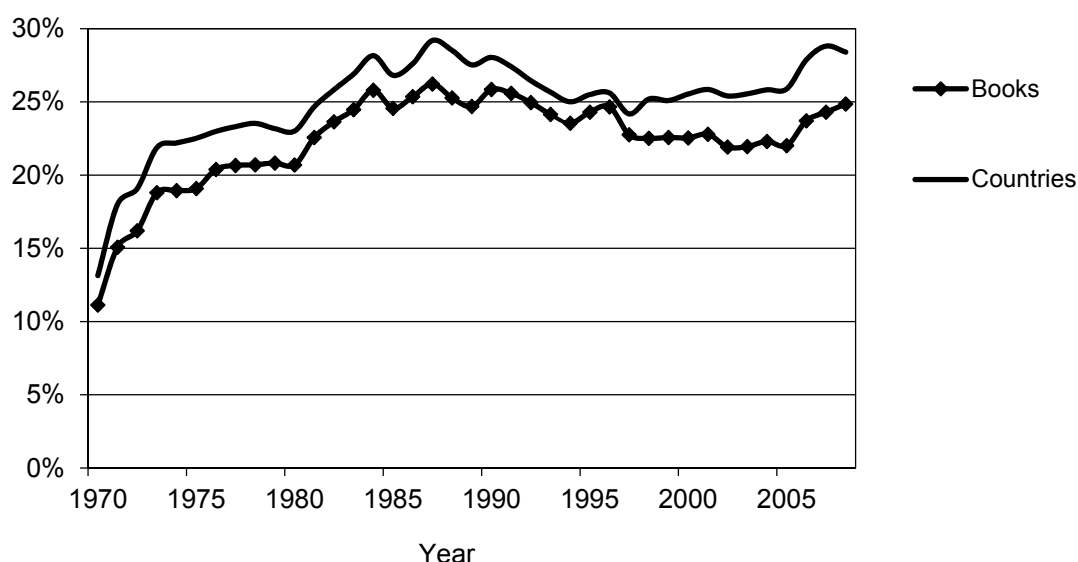
valuable to ensure that generally countries within a region follow similar trends. Indeed, in this research, most countries in the world follow quite similar patterns. A notable outlier is the case of Israel, where early books discussed the Holocaust more often than other countries of the Middle East. Given the unique position of Israel in the Middle East, it is included in the worldwide trends but excluded from regional analyses.

## Results and discussion

### *Prevalence of Holocaust discussions in textbooks*

Figure 1 presents initial findings on the extent of discussions of the Holocaust in textbooks and countries over time.

Figure 1: Average percent of books and countries discussing the Holocaust over time (n = 465 books, N = 69 countries)



Source: Bromley & Russell, 2010. Note: The data lines have been smoothed using a ten year running average.

There is an increase from about 11 % of books in 1970 discussing the Holocaust to 25 % a decade later, with most growth taking place in the 1970s and early 1980s. A possible concern is that because the sample is somewhat unevenly distributed across countries (some countries have more books than others), it could be that a few countries are unduly shaping the textbook trend. Figure 1 shows, however, that the country trend is very similar to the trend by textbooks. Further, in the distribution of the sample no single country makes up more than 6 % of the total textbook count. The proportion of countries with a book discussing the Holocaust in any

year increases from about 13 % to 27 % over the period, with the rate rising early on and remaining stable since the mid-1980s. Thus, there is a general increase in discussions of the Holocaust in textbooks over time, in support of Proposition 1. But this trend may be limited to earlier decades in some places, a point I now turn to.

Table 1 provides a more fine-grained view of the global trend by looking at the proportion of books discussing the Holocaust by region over time. For illustrative purposes, the sample is divided into three rough periods, 1970–1979, 1980–1994, and 1995–2008, as well as world regions. The three time periods were selected to highlight the main changes in the data. More fine-grained breakdowns (e.g. by decade or using smaller country groupings) show a similar trend but the number of books per region per period becomes very small.

Table 1: Proportion of textbooks discussing the Holocaust over time

	1970–1979 (n = 42)	1980–1994 (n = 197)	1995–2008 (n = 213)
Worldwide	0.19	0.27	0.24
Western Europe & North America	0.36	0.49	0.29
Eastern Europe	0.00	0.15	0.34
Middle East & North Africa	--	0.00	0.29
Latin America & Caribbean	0.00	0.15	0.18
Asia	0.00	0.11	0.12
Sub-Saharan Africa	--	0.10	0.17

Notes: (a) The proportions from periods with one or no books are excluded. (b) Number of books per region per time period are as follows: Western Europe & North America (22, 78, 56); Eastern Europe (12, 48, 59); Middle East & North Africa (1, 6, 7); Latin America & Caribbean (2, 20, 22); Asia (5, 19, 57); and Sub-Saharan Africa (0, 22, 12). (c) Four books from Israel are included in the worldwide count, but excluded from the regional trends.

From the first period in the study (the 1970s) to the second period (1980–1994) all regions for which enough books could be obtained show an increase in the proportion discussing the Holocaust, in support of Proposition 2. The worldwide average increases from 19 % of books in the sample published in the 1970s discussing the Holocaust to 27 % of books published in the 1980–1994 period. Worldwide, the proportion remains relatively stable among books in the 1980–1994 period to those from the 1995–2008 period. Looking within regions, there are striking differences that account for the relatively stable global average. Surprisingly, the proportion of books in Western Europe and North America that discuss the Holocaust drops from nearly half (49 %) for books published in the 1980–1994 period to less than a third (29 %) in the 1995–2008 period. This difference is significant at the 0.02 level us-

ing a two-tailed t-test, indicating it is unlikely that the observed results are due to chance. In analyses not shown here, the decline occurs in both traditional history textbooks and in social studies or civics textbooks, in upper level grades (11–13) as well as lower levels of high school, and in both Europe and North America separately. These findings suggest a more nuanced view of the rise of world culture may be called for. It seems plausible that Holocaust education increases as world culture is being constructed, and in later time periods the expansion slows, or even reverses as norms change or practices become so deeply institutionalized they are no longer discussed explicitly. It is important to note that although the proportion of books in the West that discuss the Holocaust has declined, the overall average remains among the highest in the world.

In contrast to Western Europe and North America, other world regions continued to increase in the proportion of books discussing the Holocaust in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. This trend is particularly striking in Eastern Europe. The proportion of books in Eastern Europe that discuss the Holocaust increased significantly from the second to third period, from 15 % to 34 %. Discussions of the Holocaust were previously rare in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe but have been increasing rapidly to a level that, in this sample, slightly surpasses that of the West since the mid-1990s.

In a detailed case study of Estonia, Stevick (2010) provides insight into one mechanism driving this trend. He shows how the desire to enter NATO played a key role in curricular decisions related to Holocaust education:

Estonia's 2002 decision to adopt a policy to commemorate Holocaust victims in schools must be understood in its international context, because it would never have been adopted without international pressure (p. 243).

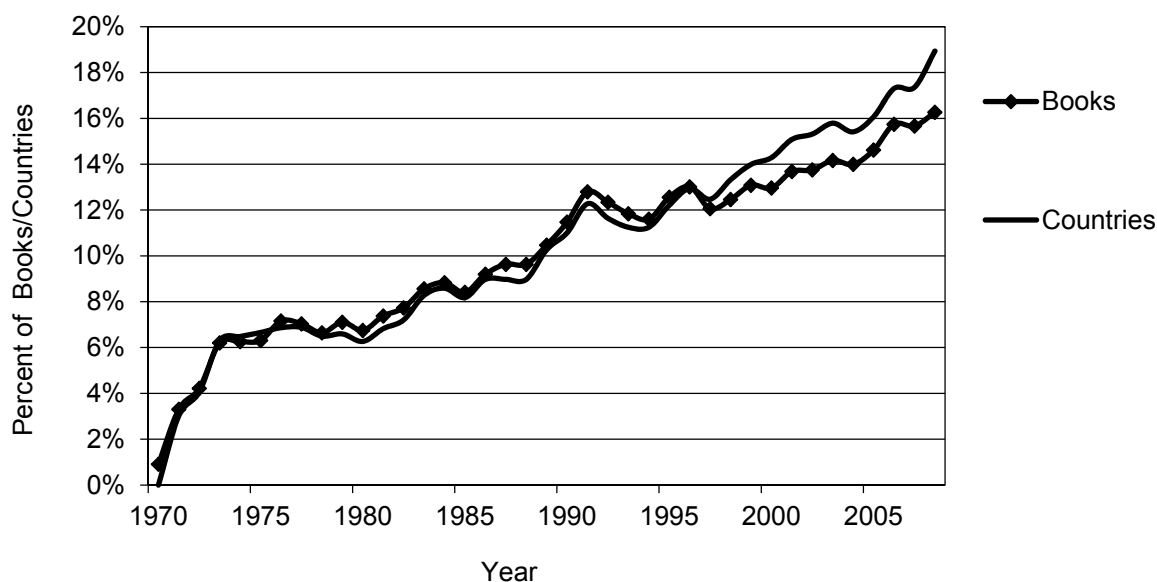
The process Stevick describes in Estonia is in many ways consistent with a neo-institutional perspective whereby countries adapt to conform to powerful principles enshrined at the international level. In a foundational piece, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) outline normative, mimetic and coercive mechanisms through which institutional practices diffuse. Coercive mechanisms include cases, like Estonia, where countries adopt innovations because of pressure from those upon whom they depend for resources. Similarly, in their adaptation of neo-institutional theory to the global level, Meyer et al. (1997) describe the 'discovery' of a fictitious island nation and its subsequent transformation into a modern nation-state through the activities of a multitude of professionals operating in accordance with principles of science, justice, and progress. In both instances, there is clearly a great deal of influence being exerted. What is notable, from an institutional perspective, is that formal domestic opposition to implementing such changes is relatively weak, although informal feelings on the matter among individuals may be quite strong. Fur-

ther, it is difficult to locate the source of influence to one particular hegemonic country, or to show directly how conformity to world principles are in the economic or security interests of powerful actors. Instead, there is a general institutionalized ideology that certain types of education benefit the world community. There is certainly a form of coercion involved in the spread of Holocaust education to some countries, but it is better characterized as the influence of cultural norms institutionalized at the world level rather than the exertion of direct power in the realpolitik sense of clear economic or security interests of any particular country. Estonia is adapting to theories of progress and justice in order to opt in to a security alliance that promotes principles now enshrined in world society, rather than being forced against its will to conform as in its prior occupation by the Soviet Union.

### *The Holocaust as human rights*

I now turn to discuss the framing of the Holocaust as a matter of human rights. Figure 2 shows a steep increase in the proportion of books and countries that discuss the Holocaust specifically as a human rights violation, in support of Proposition 3. In the 1970s very few books or countries used human rights language to discuss the Holocaust. But by 2008, nearly 20 % of textbooks and over 15 % of countries include a discussion of the Holocaust using human rights language.

Figure 2: Average percent of books and countries discussing the Holocaust as human rights over time (n = 465 books, N = 69 countries)



Source: Bromley & Russell, 2010. Note: The data lines have been smoothed using a ten year running average.

The increase is even more dramatic if we just consider the books with a discussion of the Holocaust, as shown in the first row of table 2. Results are split into two time periods, reflecting a substantive reason (to capture changes in Eastern Europe from the mid-1990s) and a methodological rationale (the sample is divided roughly evenly at this time point). Looking at trends in ten year increments, or using the three time periods in the earlier table, results in similar findings to those reported here but the number of cases per cell becomes extremely small. In the 1970s and 1980s, few textbooks discussed the Holocaust, and, of those that did, about one third used human rights language. In contrast, in the 1995 to 2008 period 65 % of Holocaust discussions in textbooks used human rights terms. This increase is found in texts on history, civics, and social studies. Worldwide, the nature of Holocaust discourse has shifted quite dramatically over time, from a matter of historical fact to a violation of human rights.

Table 2: Proportion of Holocaust discussions using human rights language over time

	1970–1994 (n = 62)	1995–2008 (n = 51)
Worldwide	0.35	0.65
Western Europe & North America	0.30	0.63
Eastern Europe	1.00	0.60
Middle East & North Africa	--	1.00
Latin America & Caribbean	0.33	1.00
Asia	0.00	0.57
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.00	0.50

Notes: (a) The proportions from periods with one or no books are excluded. (b) Number of books per region per time period are as follows: Western Europe & North America (46, 16); Eastern Europe (7, 20); Middle East & North Africa (0, 2); Latin America & Caribbean (3, 2); Asia (2, 7); and Sub-Saharan Africa (2,2). (c) Four books from Israel are included in the worldwide count, but excluded from the regional trends.

### *Discussion*

These analyses show that in the 1970s discussions of the Holocaust were limited mainly to textbooks from the countries of Western Europe and North America. Increasingly, however, the Holocaust is being addressed in textbooks worldwide. I argue that the global spread of Holocaust education and the increasing tendency to frame teaching about the Holocaust in human rights terms can be explained by the emergence of a world society.<sup>3</sup> This theoretical lens helps explain why we see teaching about the Holocaust in countries as diverse as Malawi, El Salvador, and South Africa, rather than finding it only in expected countries such as Israel, Ger-

many, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Further, it accounts for the shifting of the framing of the Holocaust from an historical event to a universal human rights violation.

These observations do not address the normative question of whether these trends are positive or effective. An optimistic interpretation argues that understanding the Holocaust in human rights terms can help foster civic and democratic values in societies worldwide (Linguist, 2008; Stevick, 2007; Misco, 2009) and can be a means to promote tolerance, peace, and justice (Salmons, 2003). Short and Reed (2004) argue that studying the Holocaust will “help secure the future against further violations of human rights whether based on ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability” (p. 2).

However, countries may have alternative, complex reasons for incorporating Holocaust education into their curricula that do not reflect a good faith effort to build peace and tolerance. As a symbol of world society, the Holocaust has powerful ideological appeal as a signal of conformity with international norms. It may be a relatively easy way for countries to symbolically indicate they adhere to the dominant norms in world society without, in practice, observing these norms in day to day practices. As described earlier, Stevick (2007) finds that Estonia adopted a Holocaust Day as a way to signal solidarity with the European and transatlantic community in advance of its entry into NATO. Much research by world society scholars emphasizes the decoupling between formal policies and actual practices. Countries may adopt formal policies to conform symbolically, but such policies do not necessarily lead to actual changes (Meyer et al., 1997). Further, claiming the universality of any social or cultural principle is open to criticism as a form of cultural hegemony. Segesten (2008) describes Romania’s experience of feeling cultural pressure to mimic European values by incorporating the Holocaust into its curriculum despite the absence of direct coercion and notes that the international norms implied by Holocaust education have yet to be institutionalized on the ground.

In some instances, references to the Holocaust may provide a way for countries to indicate that egregious human rights abuses occur beyond their borders, or to keep the principles of human rights abstract and linked to violations elsewhere. The Tunisian government has, for example, often been charged with serious human rights violations such as arbitrary arrest, torture and physical abuse of prisoners, and severe media restrictions (US Department of State, 2008). But recently published Tunisian history textbooks include extensive discussions of human rights abuses elsewhere in the world, such as colonial occupation, or poverty in the United States. In reference to the Holocaust, a 2006 Tunisian history textbook asks



students to consider why France, the country with perhaps the longest tradition of human rights, collaborated with the Nazis in exterminating Jews:

France is the land of human rights, renowned throughout the world for its tradition of welcoming foreigners, but during the Second World War the Vichy government collaborated in the extermination of European Jews even before it received orders from her Nazi occupiers. Why and how was this policy possible? (Brisson & Martin, 2006, p. 154).<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these mechanisms with a coercive flavor where countries are reacting to dominant values in world culture, curricular content also likely spreads worldwide through mimetic and normative mechanisms as education professionals and consultants travel the world and exchange ideas. The Georg Eckert Institute, where data collection took place, is one such site where the content of textbooks is carefully analyzed, evaluated, and reform recommendations are developed. As part of its mission, the Institute states that it “transfers its research results into education policy and the practical aspects of schools and textbooks” (Georg Eckert Institute, 2012). While gathering data for this project at the Institute, I met official government representatives from a number of different countries who were tasked with reforming textbooks and had come to the George Eckert Institute to examine the content of other countries’ textbooks.

Countries’ rationales for incorporating the Holocaust into high school education are complex, but a great many of these motivations are tied to the emergence of the Holocaust as a symbol of world society. Both the desire to instill proper global civic values of respect for human rights, peace and tolerance, and the goal of signaling support for these norms indicate awareness of and conformity to the principles of a broader world community. Related to these findings, one point is that not all human rights violations become equally recognized as global symbols in world culture. Just 3 % of textbooks in this sample (16 books) mention the Armenian genocide, and one third of those (5 books) come from Armenia. Atrocities committed by the Japanese in Nanjing are mentioned by just 2 % of books. Unlike these largely ignored events, the Holocaust, apartheid in South Africa, slavery, the abuses of colonization, and the mistreatment of indigenous groups are mentioned by 15 % to 25 % of books. It remains an open question and valuable area for future comparative research to consider why some events become global cultural symbols while others remain more localized issues. Possible explanations include the scope and scale of the atrocity, the particular group subject to suffering or location where the abuses took place, and perhaps the length of time since an abuse took place.

Bauman (1989, 2001) provides another possible explanation for why the Holocaust would become a symbol of world society over other human tragedies. He emphasizes the Holocaust is a product of the modern, rationalized world; a description that aptly captures contemporary world society. For Bauman, the Holocaust is

a product of modernity and rationalization: “Modern civilization was not the Holocaust’s *sufficient* condition; it was, however, most certainly its *necessary* condition” (p. 13). He argues that without the products of modern society – institutionalized, industrialized, and bureaucratic forms that accompany modern rationalized thought – an event such as the Holocaust is unlikely to occur. Modernity is not just a force for good, it also facilitates great evil. Perhaps the symbols of contemporary world society, both good and evil, are those that also fit conceptions of modernity and rationality.

## Conclusion

These findings should not be interpreted as a judgment of particular textbooks, education systems, countries or approaches to Holocaust education. The debate continues, far beyond the scope of this research, over whether the Holocaust should be conceptualized and taught in historical or human rights terms. As eloquently described by Gross & Stevick (2010, pp. 25–26):

Today, because educational instruments are often perceived as effective for advancing human rights, there is a general trend to globalize Holocaust education, to link this particular genocide to a universal story of human victimization and the struggle to overcome it. This can be important, because it has the potential to increase the breadth and depth of Holocaust scholarship. But removing the Holocaust from its historical context and placing it in the more abstract discourse on human rights may also limit its pedagogical and political value. While it conveys the Holocaust as an atrocity, it depersonalizes the perpetrators and obscures the specific circumstances in which genocide occurred in the past and occurs in the present.

This paper does not take a stance or provide evidence that speaks to whether one method of presenting the Holocaust is inherently better than another. It says nothing about the most effective methods for teaching about the Holocaust, the appropriate levels or subjects of schooling for this discussion, or how Holocaust education is shaped by particular national conditions. It does, however, provide rare longitudinal and cross-national data that speaks to the status of Holocaust education, not only in Europe and North America, but also parts of the world where related scholarship is sparse, such as South America, Africa, and Asia. It shows that the Holocaust is increasingly discussed in human rights terms, even within traditional history texts. In addition, it provides evidence that countries outside of Western Europe and North America are increasing their coverage of the Holocaust in textbooks. I argue that these findings provide evidence that social and cultural globalization, in the form of an emerging world society, is a central explanatory condition for understanding the inclusion of the Holocaust and its framing in human rights terms in textbooks worldwide.

Studying the effects of various forms of Holocaust education around the world, both using textbooks and other pedagogical strategies, is an area of primary importance for continued future research. (For cutting-edge work in this area see Meseth & Proske's (2010) study of the German context.) Through an in-depth analysis of a very few textbooks and their use in classrooms, one could explore whether changing textbook emphases co-vary with individual-level knowledge, beliefs and attitudes regarding the Holocaust. Considering these more specific measures will facilitate a deeper exploration of the mechanisms that promote or inhibit Holocaust education at the individual level. Such research would require much more detailed data than used here but could provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between conceptions of the Holocaust in textbooks and student interpretations of these depictions.

The central contribution of this study is to identify broad changes in Holocaust education worldwide over time. Existing research on Holocaust education largely focuses on case studies, often from the US, UK, Israel, Canada, Germany, Poland, and Austria. (See, for example, the collection of studies in the two volume special issue on 'Policies and Practices of Holocaust Education' in *Prospects: UNESCO's Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* published in 2010). This research complements case studies by providing a cross-national, longitudinal view of trends in Holocaust education. The Holocaust is increasingly taught about in terms of human rights, in history as well as civics and social studies, and increasingly appears in the intended curricula of non-Western countries. Observing these worldwide trends helps to show the extent to which cultural globalization is influencing Holocaust education. Further, interpreting Holocaust education as part of the emergence of a world culture and society helps to explain why we find education about the Holocaust in countries worldwide, and why we see a global shift towards teaching about the Holocaust in human rights terms.

### Notes

1. January 2013: This paper benefitted from the comments of participants in the 'Education and the Holocaust. Educational and cultural studies border crossings between national and global memory discourses' panel at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the German Society for Education Research in Osnabrück (March 2012). Special thanks go to panel organizers, Dr. Wolfgang Meseth and Prof. Dr. Matthias Proske. Data collection was funded by a grant from the Spencer Foundation (200600003) to John Meyer and Francisco Ramirez. The study was possible only because of the extensive textbook collection of the George Eckert Institute, in Braunschweig and the assistance of library staff. In addition, thank you individual colleagues who helped collect textbooks, including Dijana Tiplic, Suk Ying Wong, Rennie Moon, David Suárez, Marine Chitashvili, Pepka Boyadjieva, Shushanik Makaryan, Marika Korotkova, Gili

- Drori, Susan Garnett Russell, Sandra Staklis, Marina Andina, Jaime Quevedo, Nii Addy, Magdalena Gross, and Rebecca Taylor.
2. The examples in this section are drawn from earlier, related work (Bromley & Russell, 2010).
  3. As used here, the term world society refers specifically to the concept developed by Meyer et al. 1997, also sometimes called the world polity or world culture. World society consists of a set of cultural models that define who legitimate actors are, what goals they can pursue, and how they can pursue them. Sovereign states, for example, are key actors in the international arena, but international non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and professionals have growing standing for autonomous action as well. The historical bases of these models are rooted in European traditions of rationality, science, and philosophy, but they have come to be depicted as universally relevant.
  4. The original French text is: “Alors que la France est le pays des droits de l’homme, qu’elle se singularise dans le monde par sa tradition d’accueil des étrangers, pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, sans attendre les ordres de l’occupant nazi, le gouvernement de Vichy a collaboré à l’extermination des Juifs d’Europe. Pourquoi et comment cette politique a-t-elle été possible?”

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## Appendix A: List of textbooks by country over time

Country	1970–1984	1985–1994	1995–2006	Total
Argentina	1	2	4	7
Armenia	0	1	6	7
Australia	2	4	2	8
Austria	5	4	3	12
Belarus	0	1	3	4
Belgium	2	3	2	7
Bolivia	0	5	0	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1	8	9
Bulgaria	8	4	4	16
Canada	4	4	3	11
Colombia	1	6	0	7
Costa Rica	0	0	4	4
Croatia	0	1	1	2
Czechoslovakia	3	1	0	4
Denmark	2	2	2	6
Ecuador	0	1	4	5
El Salvador	0	0	1	1
Ethiopia	0	2	0	2
Finland	2	2	0	4
France	5	5	5	15
Georgia	0	0	5	5
Germany	2	2	2	6
Ghana	0	8	6	14
Greece	1	2	2	5
Guatemala	0	0	2	2
Guyana	0	0	1	1
India	3	2	9	14
Indonesia	0	0	12	12
Iran	2	2	0	4
Ireland	3	2	4	9
Israel	1	4	0	5
Italy	1	2	2	5
Japan	2	2	3	7
Kenya	0	6	0	6
Latvia	0	0	3	3
Macedonia	0	1	1	2
Malawi	0	0	2	2
Mexico	1	3	2	6
Namibia	0	3	0	3
Nepal	0	0	7	7
Nicaragua	0	1	0	1
North Korea	0	2	4	6
Northern Ireland	0	0	2	2
Norway	2	2	2	6
PR China	0	1	1	2
Pakistan	0	0	3	3
Panama	0	1	2	3

Country	1970–1984	1985–1994	1995–2006	Total
Philippines	0	4	2	6
Portugal	2	2	2	6
Puerto Rico	0	0	1	1
Romania	1	2	2	5
Russia	0	4	23	27
Serbia	0	1	2	3
Singapore	0	2	0	2
Slovenia	0	1	2	3
South Africa	2	2	0	4
South Korea	3	3	4	10
Spain	3	2	6	11
Sweden	2	2	2	6
Switzerland	2	2	1	5
Taiwan	0	1	12	13
Tanzania	0	0	8	8
Tunisia	0	0	3	3
Turkey	2	1	4	7
United States	3	6	3	12
USSR	14	12	0	26
United Kingdom	7	5	11	23
Venezuela	0	1	1	2
Yugoslavia	3	2	0	5
Total	97	150	218	465



## Appendix B: Countries discussing the Holocaust and Holocaust as human rights violation

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