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Dialogue and transformation in Holocaust education? Reweaving the tapestry of experience, research and practice

Doyle Stevick

University of South Carolina

Abstract

This article draws upon Habermas's three human interests to discuss different goals in Holocaust education research, namely the technical/instrumental interest in changing others' racist views, the communicative interest in understanding how such views make sense to others from their own perspective through dialogue, and the emancipatory interest in self-knowledge through which the researcher can uncover both implicit values about how things should be and implicit, and perhaps even subconscious theories of how things work. Achieving greater clarity about these implicit normative and empirical foundations of researchers' design decisions and interpretations has several positive outcomes: first, it enhances subjectivity, positionality and transparency in a field that is often highly personal for its participants; second, it enables the field to deliberate about the ethical dimensions of the work, while making theories about how things work explicit opens them up for critical examination; third, it has heuristic value, sharing ways of thinking, meaningful narratives and metaphors that may enhance Habermas's second, communicative interest in understanding.

In practice, Habermas's three interests are not cleanly differentiated in Holocaust education research and practice, but are interconnected. This article focuses upon the emancipatory interest by exploring the interrelationships between experience and inquiry, or more specifically, how the author's encounter with tragedy shaped an evolving research agenda in Holocaust education. It revealed a set of implicit theories and commitments that, once unearthed and made explicit, are available for reflection and critique. It also clarified the ethical and empirical grounds for certain theories and commitments.

1. Introduction: Missed opportunities to engage, challenge and change racist views

My encounters with racism haunt me. I sought to understand how education can reveal, engage and transform racist views in others. I want there to be a right reaction, a magic formula, some specific script I can recite that will unmask the bigotry and ignorance in these moments and transform them. How do I change attitudes? How do I make sense of others' problematic views? And how do I transform my own perspective in the process?

It is an account of an experience with Holocaust education that vexes me most. I only have one side of this exchange, and it certainly should not be trusted. Nevertheless, it is worth reading in its highly biased form. In the late 1990s, this young man reflected on his middle school years and wrote the following account for a racist organization's newsletter:

> My genesis of racial awakening began in eighth grade. By law, all Illinois students in the eighth grade are forced to learn about the Jewish 'Holocaust' in National Socialist Germany. The best way to describe my eighth grade teacher is 'dirty Jew'.
>
> The Jew teacher began with the 'slaughtering' of the Indians by white pioneers and settlers. He then moved to the 'evils' of Black slavery and ended with the 'murder of six million Jews' ... The entire class was mind manipulation, pure and simple, but then it happened ... The LA Race riots broke out overnight. I saw scenes of niggers burning down the City of Angels and dragging whites from their cars for no reason other than the color of their skin.[1] The experience was brutal and frightening. What if this happened in Chicago? What would Whites do if a full-scale Race War broke out? (Burghart, 1999).

The author of this account set me on the path to Holocaust education in the first place. He was my Latin student in college, and soon after failing my course, he attempted to ignite a 'racial holy war'. He shot eleven people, killing two. Slick with his own blood and hurling racial epithets at the black officer trying to apprehend him, he took his own life.

Trying to make sense of this event played a central role in my thinking about Holocaust education, sometimes in ways that I did not even recognize. Many of the concepts and theories that helped me to make sense of this tragedy in turn shaped my conceptualization of research and interpretation of findings. Habermas's emphasis on the emancipatory human interest, which is discussed below, invokes self-knowledge and encourages us to identify, through reflection, "the way one's history and biography has expressed itself in the way one sees" (MacIsaac, 1996). This article articulates some of the normative and empirical perspectives that undergirded the research that was spawned by this experience.

These ideas, which were implicit and were formed largely unconsciously, concerned dialogue and possible means of transforming individual and collective atti-

tudes and dispositions. The goal, therefore, is not to establish these theories and values as proven, but to make them available as heuristic tools that can facilitate understanding and that, once made explicit, can be subjected to critique. Data are selected to illuminate these theories and perspectives in order to facilitate Habermas's communicative interest of understanding rather than to prove a given proposition from a technical/instrumental interest in the positivist sense.

2. Making sense of tragedy: Relating experience to research

While I suffered no direct harm in this case, this event shredded many of the beliefs I held about education, about racism, about rationality. The significance of the word choice, 'to shred', is discussed below. The experience revealed to me that I hold beliefs and assumptions that I was not aware of, even though they were deeply ingrained in me. They turned out to be wrong. Unlike people who convert from one religion or political party to another, from one internally coherent belief system to another, I had no easy substitute belief system ready to fill the void where those beliefs had been. I had to make sense of the world anew. My views had to be slowly, carefully reconstructed over time, a process I undertook in part by moving into the field of international and comparative education and undertaking research related to attitudes, belief systems, and culture. Experience and inquiry were intimately and deeply interconnected, often in ways I did not even recognize.

Disorientation, discomfort and emotional turmoil often attend the realization that many closely held and cherished personal beliefs can no longer be maintained. Transformations are often difficult, challenging, and unpleasant. This experience generated my own implicit or subconscious theories about how such transformations can and do – and should – take place. My own experience – shredding and reweaving – became an implicit template for the kinds of change that were possible and necessary. An insightful peer reviewer for this journal brought these implicit ideas to the surface by challenging me to more closely account for the ways in which this particular experience had shaped my analysis of the politics of Holocaust education in post-Soviet Estonia.

Reflecting on the deeper ways in which such experiences have shaped my scholarship can be valuable both for the sake of transparency and for others who have even deeper and more direct personal connections to the history and legacy of the Holocaust.[2] The connection between personal experiences, beliefs and perspectives and research are particularly important in Holocaust education. Many normative and theoretical debates in the field may be rooted in underlying implicit theories and values, and therefore cannot be resolved through data alone.

The dialogue intrinsic in the peer review process helped the researcher to discover the sources, the values and assumptions that informed these interpretations. The peer review process therefore both contributed significantly in terms of Habermas's third human interest, the emancipatory interest, that is best pursued through critical self-reflection, and unearthed implicit theories and commitments.

3. Habermas's human interests and the goals of Holocaust education research

MacIsaac (1996) aligns Habermas's three human interests (Habermas, 1972) with three types of research. Technical or instrumental interests may involve how to influence or change others. An instrumental approach to Holocaust education might attempt to develop tools for foreign advocates to change the attitudes of students in Central and Eastern Europe about the Holocaust. While one might support the ends in question, the means implicit in this orientation do not humanize the participants and treat them as equals. In this frame, they would simply be subjected to what is perceived to 'work'. Empirical-analytical research methods associated with a positivistic viewpoint characterize this human interest. Methods and procedures lead to proper conclusions and guard against bias. Communication is not dialogue but a transaction to deliver or acquire information

A practical, communicative interest is rooted in understanding. This is an interpretive or humanistic task. The whole of one's research and experience shape the interpretation of each datum, while each datum may in turn reshape the broader understanding of the whole. Hermeneutics derived from this approach to Biblical exegesis, in which the whole is used to interpret the part, and the part used to illuminate the whole, in an ongoing circle. A communicative interest would ask how attitudes about the Holocaust across the region of Central and Eastern Europe make sense to those who live there. In relation to their own cultural values and historical experiences, how do they make sense of the Holocaust? Dialogue is a key tool to develop such understanding; it is used instrumentally to achieve understanding, rather than functioning as a key ethical commitment as it might in the emancipatory interest.

Habermas's emancipatory interest is focused upon criticism and liberation of the self. It turns inward. This interest is served by the methods of the critical social sciences and identifies self-knowledge and "interest in the way one's history and biography has expressed itself in the way one sees oneself, one's roles and social expectations" (MacIsaac, 1996). Framing emancipation in this way draws attention to the individual researcher's change and growth. "Knowledge is gained by self-emancipation through reflection leading to a transformed consciousness or '*per-*

spective transformation'" (ibid.). In this conception, reflection follows dialogue; dialogue functions as an invitation to self-transformation. To understand another, or a dialogue, requires understanding one's own role in it.

These three human interests come into play in promoting transformations in Holocaust education. The technical/instrumental interest wants to determine how to change others' perceived racist view. The communicative interest wants to understand the interrelated sets of beliefs, values and assumptions in which such problematic views are anchored. The emancipatory interest notes that such encounters can teach us much about ourselves, liberating us from the influence of ideas that are below the surface.

4. The ethical stance of the researcher towards dialogue and self-transformation

The emancipatory interest is self-transformation and the cardinal virtue is openness to difference, to change, to a challenge of one's own perspective. If one hopes to advance social change and reduce prejudice, then self-transformation and openness are critical. The obligation to account for one's own role is reaffirmed by the idea that understanding is relational. "Understanding is not contained within me, or within you, but in that which we generate together in our form of relatedness" (Gergen, 1988, as cited in Schwandt, 1999, p. 457). Ross applied what she calls 'relational theories' to reconceptualize the relationship between researcher and researched, teacher and pupil, and it applies to international partnerships as well. It has to include "the critical self-reflections of the researcher, and the researcher-respondent relationships" (Bloom, 1998, as cited in Ross, 2002, 142).

The nature of these reflections and of the relationships is not simply an analytical matter. Never is "knowledge of individual others a straightforwardly empirical matter requiring no particular moral stance toward the person" (Blum, 1994, as cited in Ross, 2002, p. 412).

> Understanding requires an openness to experience, a willingness to engage in a dialogue with that which challenges our self-understanding … and [we] simultaneously risk confusion and uncertainty both about ourselves and about the other person we seek to understand (Schwandt, 1999, p. 458 f.).

Schwandt elaborates that to understand, we avoid simply defending our own beliefs or criticizing whatever the other person offers. L. Code elaborates this conception as

> a matter of orientation toward the world and towards one's knowledge-seeking self as part of the world. The intellectually virtuous person values knowing and understanding how

> things really are. S/he renounces the temptation to live with partial explanations where fuller ones are attainable (Code, 1983, as cited in Schwandt, 1999, p. 460).

M. Scott Peck (2006, p. 162) goes so far as to call a firm commitment to reality a central tenet of mental health. For Peck, "a life of total dedication to the truth also means willingness to be challenged" (1978, p. 52). And as Nietzsche expressed it so succinctly, "a very popular error: having the courage of one's convictions; rather it is a matter of having the courage for an attack on one's convictions" (http://www.quotedb.com/quotes/2573). Ross holds that "knowing particular people across spaces of difference requires the moral capacities of response, care, emotional sensitivity – the ability to see the other as a being in her own right" (Blum, 1994, as cited in Ross, 2002, p. 412), and notes "the importance of moral agency, perception and responsiveness" (Ross, 2002, p. 422).

While these moral and ethical stances that we seek to achieve as researchers and educators are critical for our self-reflection in Habermas's third, emancipatory human interest, we cannot assume such a posture for others. As presented, therefore, Habermas's framework does not theorize others' transformations or provide much assistance with supporting the reflection and transformation of others, particularly those who do not share the open ethical orientation that we seek to achieve for ourselves. The next section discusses two distinct models that the author had developed while grappling with these issues and invites ethical and empirical work on the implicit theories of transformations that undergird Holocaust education pedagogy at different sites and in curricula.

5. Repairing the tapestry: Two cultural models of transformation

The experience that shredded the author's views resulted in a transformed perspective. This particular transformation was inflicted rather than invited; it did not result from the intellectual virtues and ethical commitments that serve Habermas's emancipatory interest. It did generate an implicit theory of perspective transformation, one rooted in cultural beliefs. This theory emerged through self-reflection that was inspired by the dialogic encounter with peer-review comments.

5.1 Shredding the tapestry

The metaphor of a shredded and rewoven tapestry has heuristic value for thinking about perspective transformation. An individual's worldview, beliefs, values, and culture are envisioned as a tapestry of interwoven threads. The term 'shred' captures how many interconnected beliefs and assumptions were severed by this event. My stereotype of racists – I expected shaved heads, racist tattoos, seething hatred, and other visible cues – and my belief that education and racism were incompatible

and that beliefs could be changed by arguments were interwoven, and they were shredded by this encounter. They could not be reattached. I needed new threads – understandings – to repair the damage.

This implicit model of transformation that I experienced, and that became my implicit template, was one of violence to the weaving, shredding, a change that was imposed. I suspect that an implicit theory of shock as a key element in understanding and transformation is intrinsic to the pedagogical approaches that emphasize graphic depictions of the Holocaust, both verbal and pictorial, that capture the sadists, the cruelest humiliations and horrors. While empirical investigations could tell us much about whether these approaches work in the anticipated or implicitly theorized ways, the ethics of sharing these materials are debated (e.g., MacGilchrist & Christophe, 2011), and it is important to be clear about the empirical and ethical bases for these practices.

5.2 Pulling the tapestry's loose thread

A problematic tapestry might unravel by pulling a single loose thread. If pulled too hard, the thread might break and the opportunity lost. But if pulled gently, the tapestry may begin to unravel. A Lithuanian colleague experienced such a process. He held an incorrect perception about Efraim Zuroff, the 'Nazi Hunter' from the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) in Jerusalem, who sought to prosecute Holocaust perpetrators in the Baltic States. Zuroff is a polarizing figure in the region, and I had myself perceived him to be intimidating and unapproachable, not realizing that my impressions were shaped by the Baltic media, whose portrayals were at best unsympathetic, if not openly anti-Semitic (in cases documented by defendinghistory.com).

My colleague, subjected to the same media treatment and a product of Lithuanian culture, believed that Zuroff was funded by Russians, who, it was assumed, had a subversive political agenda to advance in the region. Because I had met Dr. Zuroff, I was able to challenge this single fact: Zuroff informed me that he did not accept any support from Russian sources because it would make him vulnerable to such charges. Rather than an imposition, I invited rather than imposed a reconsideration of the bigger picture; to follow the metaphor of the unraveling tapestry, I handed him the thread, and he pulled. The tug was a CNN article and video that noted the participation of local Lithuanians in a slaughter outside Vilnius.[3] My colleague noted that confronting this reality was quite difficult and painful, and challenged many of the understandings he had grown up with as a Lithuanian national. He not only engaged in the process, he wrote publicly and bravely about the controversy when Lithuanian insignia linked to the Swastika were legalized in that country, an act that was not well received by several of his colleagues.

The process of repairing a damaged tapestry begins with the damage, and these two processes, shredding and unraveling, are quite distinct; the former is more violent, imposed and involuntary, while the latter is more gentle, invited and voluntary. The approach to engagement rather than confrontation privileges dialogue over discussion (Abma et al., 2001).

The tapestry metaphor is rooted in a conception of individual transformation that takes place through cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. It is thus inadequate for the task of broader social and cultural transformations. Social and cultural transformations require more than the aggregation of individual psychological changes.

Could changing attitudes and dispositions be accomplished more effectively in schools? Foreign advocates of Holocaust education in Estonia hoped so. Unfortunately, their advocacy was rooted in a banking model of education, which Paulo Freire critiqued as transactional exchanges in the manner of Habermas's technical human interest. The effort backfired dramatically.

6. Conceptualizing a national effort to transform attitudes through schooling

My encounter with the continuing legacy of Nazi racial ideology, an inclusive hatred rooted in eliminationist anti-Semitism spurred me to explore the nature and power of education to change attitudes and dispositions. I sought to understand how a well-educated student in high-quality universities and elite public schools could embrace such discredited racial ideas. I discovered that there had never been an effort to incorporate anti-racist curricula nationally in the United States, even after the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954 to desegregate public schools. Despite the importance of the Brown decision, segregated schools persisted, and persist today: the United States has failed to live up to the promise of the opportunity. The decision represented a profound legal and institutional transformation. But legal and institutional transformations do not take hold unless there is a parallel social and cultural transformation of attitudes and dispositions to sustain it.

Schools are the most promising mechanism for producing cultural and social changes to fulfill profound legal and institutional change. The collapse of the Soviet Union constituted such a legal and institutional transformation. But what might a national effort to transform social and cultural attitudes and dispositions through education look like? I selected Estonia – an apparent success story among the former Soviet Union's 15 states – for a case study because its situation was in some critical respects analogous to what I sought but did not find in American history. For my purposes, the ways in which the Estonian government used civic edu-

cation to foster democratic values in students was analogous to what might have been in the U.S. had the government undertaken a national effort to combat racism through schooling.

7. The Estonian context of the research

Estonia's complex history involved ethnic Estonians living under local German landowners in the Russian empire at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite their inferior status to the German landowners, animosity was primarily directed towards the Russians. Estonians looked to Germans as a model when they sought to develop a national consciousness and an intellectual class (Trasberg, 2001). Estonia first achieved independence in 1922, fighting off German and Russian forces. The Estonians' relationship with Germans and Russians persisted in the context of the Second World War, when, unknown to the Estonians, the German-Soviet alliance and secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact paved the way for a Soviet invasion of Estonia in 1939.

When the alliance faltered shortly after, the Nazis drove the Soviets out of Estonia, and were often perceived by Estonians, both then and now, as liberators. A three year Nazi occupation commenced, and roughly 3,000 of Estonia's original 4,000 Jews had fled east with the retreating Soviet army. 400 of Estonia's Jews had already been deported to the east by the Soviets during their original occupation, and nearly 1,000 perished in the Holocaust before Estonia was declared 'Judenrein', or free of Jews (Weiss-Wendt, 2008, p. 476). When the Soviets advanced into Estonia again, they would remain for nearly a half century, formally annexing Estonia in the Soviet Union, and leaving Russian troops in place for several years after Estonia officially regained independence in 1991. During the half-century occupation, Estonians were often denigrated as fascists or fascist collaborators, the Holocaust was largely ignored with Jewish victims absorbed into the politically useful category of Soviet victims, and Nazi atrocities as a whole were attributed to capitalist excesses. Stalinism included massive transfers of populations, and the relative homogeneity of the territory of pre-Soviet Estonia was extensively Russified, as hundreds of thousands of Russian-speakers were moved into the territory once held by just a million ethnic Estonians (Raun, 1991, p. 181). Few of these Russian-speakers became proficient in Estonian, and relations with the Russian minority were a major concern in the years after 1991. Estonia restored its independence and prewar constitution, rather than reimagining itself as a multicultural society in need of a new constitution (Budryte, 2005).

8. International education partnerships: Dialogue or transaction?

I conducted a multi-sited ethnographic study of the policy and practice of citizenship education in post-Soviet Estonia, from international networks to classroom practice. I observed interactions between international and national actors at seminars and conferences, between both of these groups and teachers at teacher trainings and educational partnerships, and between teachers and students in classrooms around the country. I collected the materials that were distributed, and observed what was used in classrooms.

While a great deal of foreign money was spent in Estonia to support – or more precisely, to sway – the process of democratizing education, I could detect little if any influence of these foreign partners in Estonian civic education classrooms. I had to explain why the influence I had anticipated was absent. While other factors played roles, the lack of authentic dialogue between different groups and levels was important.

The conceptual framework for my research was the policy as practice approach to policy implementation developed by Levinson and Sutton (2001). This approach, rooted in the anthropology of policy, is particularly concerned with appropriation. Levinson and Sutton (2001) define appropriation as,

> an active process of cultural production through borrowing, recontextualizing, remolding, and thereby resignifying cultural forms .... [It] emphasizes the agency of local actors in interpreting and adapting [resources] to the situated logic in their contexts of everyday practice (p. 17, fn. 2).

Appropriation "gets at the way individuals ... engage in situated behaviors that are both constrained and enabled by existing structures, but which allow the person to exercise agency in the emerging situation" (ibid., p. 3). Appropriation addresses that need because it helps us to grasp how actors make sense of policy, fit it into their own ways of thinking and acting, and manifest it in their practice.

This approach intersects well with Habermas's emphasis on communicative interests and the goal of understanding. This framework showed how facts and arguments are meaningful to people: meaning is not self-evident. Facts do not sit independently, disconnected from other facts, ready to be replaced by updated facts; rather, they are meaningful, rooted in webs of meaning, or interwoven like the tapestry. Belief systems such as my student's were not so easily transformed, partly because there was an internal coherence to the belief system. The first task was to understand how something made sense to an individual or cultural group.

This approach illuminated the failure of international groups to have a more substantive and detectable influence in Estonian civic education. One issue derived from their 'transmission orientation' (Stevick, 2008), an approach not rooted in

dialogue and mutual understanding but in supplying the right answers to others who they find to have a simple deficit that needs to be filled. This transmission orientation was powerfully illustrated by a teacher who showed me a half-meter high pile of materials she had received at different foreign-sponsored trainings over the years, with scant time to review any of it, nonetheless use it in a packed curriculum. While foreign advocates seemed to have a genuine respect for people in the region, there was also a perception on the part of foreign experts that the correct views had to be delivered. Schwandt's distinction between discussion and dialogue is useful here. He characterizes discussion as,

> the exchange of opinions in a negotiation context where various people state their reasons or evidence. The aim is to decide about how it should be ... the object of the game is to win or get points for yourself (Abma et al., 2001).

Discussion can thus be largely one-directional when there is a significant power imbalance, as existed in this case (Stevick, 2008).

In contrast, "dialogue … refers to engaged, inclusive and respectful communications … about their respective stances and values, perspectives and experiences, hopes and dreams, and interpretations" (Abma et al., 2001, p. 168). Such exchanges are usually, "governed by role and status differences and protected through self-interests", while we seek to replace them with "interactions guided by reciprocity, appreciation for the worldviews and interests of Others and a willingness to make space for their concerns and agendas" (ibid., p. 169).

The conditions for genuine dialogue in this sense were, in my 27 months conducting research in Estonia, exceedingly rare. There were occasional exceptions. One textbook author, an ethnic Estonian largely raised abroad after being displaced by the Second World War, sought to bring the lessons he learned from living in democratic societies back to post-Soviet Estonia. Fluent in the language, he was particularly attuned to the meanings he encountered. As he expressed it in an interview,

> I found it psychologically impossible to write the Estonian text while being [abroad] … if you want to change attitudes, you have to be in the surroundings where the counterproductive aspects of interpersonal relations hit you literally every day (Interview Transcript, August, 2003).

To put this perspective in Habermas's terms, communicative interests must precede instrumental interests; we must understand before we can hope to change. He shared an example that employed the second method discussed above of tugging on a single thread in the tapestry to begin unraveling an interwoven set of thoughts, beliefs, and so forth:

> I remember buying … an ironing iron … The sales lady, a young girl [was] quite helpful, more helpful than was typical at that time. But she explained that, 'These are here, and these are the Italian ones, and our irons are cheaper'. And I smiled, and said, 'Yes, *our* irons', and at this moment she realized that that was the Russian [iron]; Estonia has been independent for a couple of years" (Interview Transcript, August, 2003).

The exchange is powerful because the word 'our' evokes meaning, history, and identity. Was a Western European iron a foreign product, and were Estonians still part of the Russian sphere? Or had they been restored to their rightful and historical European roots? A single comment disrupts a whole interrelated set of assumptions, associations, and so forth. While she was surely aware of Estonia's restored independence, the full implications of that shift had not penetrated the routines of everyday life.

Habermas wrote of the 'ideal speech situation' that would enable true dialogue or authentic open communication. Many of the conditions that allowed the exchange over the irons to be effective were absent from international partnerships. Foreign participants generally did not speak the local language or have experience living in the societies where they worked. They were often oblivious to the economic conditions others faced. Estonians, on the other hand, had a half-century of experience under Soviet hegemony, which enabled them to make a clear distinction between what they were expected to say and what they personally believed. Because of economic scarcity, they had a powerful incentive to maintain strong ties to foreign groups, whether they believed in the work or not. For foreigners, projects were a means to promote certain ideas. For domestic partners, the projects were often a means to secure the resources they needed for economic security. The same power imbalances and transmission orientation that characterized most international partnerships prevailed in international negotiations over Holocaust education, an issue that exploded during my first year in Estonia.

9. Suppressed dialogue about the Holocaust in Post-Soviet Estonia

Estonia's announcement in 2002 that it had adopted a Holocaust education day not only prompted a public backlash from citizens and educators, the Ministry of Education actively worked to undermine its implementation in the form intended by foreign advocates (Stevick, 2007, 2009, 2011). At the geopolitical level, power was at work: NATO insisted that work on Holocaust issues was a primary consideration in the Baltic State's quest for security from its former hegemon's – the Soviet Union's – successor state, Russia. At the level of national identity, Estonians had long been subjected to Soviet propaganda and charges of fascism, charges it was eager to refute. In the course of reacting against the dominant narrative, they found themselves in the uncomfortable position of asserting a Western and European

identity whose predominant historical narrative had more in common with the Soviet narrative than their own.

A substantial gulf emerged between Estonians and the foreign advocates on the Holocaust and related issues. Such a gulf was termed by anthropologist Michael Agar a "rich point" (1994, p. 94). A rich point is constituted not just by simple conflict, but by a complex amalgam of differences: different cultures, different contexts, different information, different interpretations and understandings. Such differences run deep and implicate self-understandings and national identity; they are not easily resolved with the presentation of some set of specific indisputable facts, for example. In the terms discussed above, the rich point is like the single thread that sticks out of the tapestry.

There is a strong, broadly shared view about the Holocaust and its meaning in Western Europe and the United States. It is so deeply held that its reality seems almost self-evident, a given, a natural conclusion based upon the overwhelming evidence. This perception affects the approach taken by foreign Holocaust education advocates who operated in Estonia. The problem seems to have been conceptualized as a gap or deficit that could be addressed by the transmission of information to fill the void. As the U.S. Ambassador expressed the challenge in an editorial:

> I have been told Estonian school textbooks treat the Holocaust in about one-and-a-half pages. If this is true for most of Estonia, I would suggest that history texts on this subject already in other states in this region be translated into Estonian for use here (DeThomas, 2002).

The comment is interesting for many reasons – not least its implication that there is nothing nationally significant about Estonia's experience of the Holocaust to be addressed and its assumption that there were more substantial treatments available in neighboring countries that could be adopted – but is perhaps most indicative of the perspective that there was simply a void that needed to be filled.

Estonians believed that establishing a Holocaust day in schools was the "ticket-stub" for admission into NATO (mauri, 2003). This understanding made the Holocaust education policy particularly troubling to Estonians for a number of reasons. First, it was a blatant exhibition of power. In addition, the issue was not open for discussion or dissent internationally: Estonian officials felt compelled to suppress their own views while paying lip service to foreign pronouncements. The Baltic states and their colleagues across Central and Eastern Europe could never have come together for a pronouncement like the Prague Declaration without the security of membership in the European Union and NATO.[4] What comes across as a new assertiveness is an expression of views long-held but temporarily suppressed due to the context of imbalanced power relations. Now the views are evident, in the public sphere, open for discussion, and available for examination by argument and by evi-

dence. While any expression of Holocaust denial and even obfuscation is troubling, this shift may provide an opportunity for engagement and dialogue, which may be preconditions for any deeper transformation.

Indeed, this openness about views, however unpleasant they may be and however missionary its advocates, provides the best opportunity to advance Holocaust education in the region since 1991. More precisely, the debate and dialogue may properly be considered as a form of Holocaust education, since the issues in question are not confined to children only. Advocates of Holocaust education for Central and Eastern Europe cannot confine their attention to middle or secondary schools, but must embrace a broad conception that includes adult education, particularly taking into account the perspectives of children's teachers and families. If attitudes shift among adults, schools are likely to follow. Holocaust education is premised on a foundation of transformation through learning, a premise that applies equally with adults.

In an earlier article, I examined how the question of Holocaust education manifested a central problem for democratic theory in contexts with transnational governments such as the E.U. (Stevick, 2009). The problem of 'overlapping majorities' (Thompson, 1999) made one wonder whether a policy strongly supported by a European majority and strongly rejected by a national majority should be adopted; a case could be made that either option is, or is not, a democratic outcome. In this situation, power imbalances functioned to suppress open discussion and debate over the Holocaust and its meanings, which undermined the possibility of successful and meaningful policy implementation. That this debate is now out in the open moves us towards conditions preferred by advocates of agonistic democracy, that is, a "struggle in a well-lit place" (Ross, 2002, p. 424). Such an effort is not about "how politicians posture, demand, and concede, [nor] how people tolerate each other by muffling their disagreements and turning a blind eye to their injustices," but rather how we "make democracy out of difference" (ibid.).

Democratic relations are possible among equals, and the power shift no longer compels Central and East European countries to treat their Western neighbors as de facto superiors in the same way. This is an important development, not least because the methods used to promote the Holocaust education day policy were perceived as coercive, and were problematic for a variety of other reasons, including: Estonians found their treatment reminiscent of the Soviets; the approaches seemed to intrude into domestic matters, such as cultural and education policy, which were felt to be independent and democratic for the first time in a half-century; the understanding or interpretation of history promoted from without was more closely aligned with the Soviet version than with their own; and outside efforts reinforced

notions that foreigners neither understood nor respected Estonian history and culture, but rather presumed to tell them what to do and what to believe.

The use of accession proceedings to push for action on Holocaust education was problematic for several reasons. It was not uncommon to hear references to Brussels, for example, headquarters of the European Union, as the new Moscow, a distant place with no knowledge of or concern for Estonia, undemocratically giving orders to a small, powerless country. The Euroskeptics were relatively strong in Estonia, and many asked why struggle for liberation from one union (Soviet) only to enter another (European), as if there were no meaningful distinctions between them. The rhetoric may not have reflected actual views so much as a generalized frustration with foreign interference. This frustration was symbolized on the European side by the 80,000 pages of regulations candidate countries had to adopt to become eligible for membership, while the NATO and American push on the Holocaust seemed to impinge on domestic concerns such as the conduct of the criminal justice system and decisions about what to teach and how to teach it.

10. Open dialogue about the Holocaust in Estonia

As in my work on international partnerships, I found in the controversy over Holocaust education a pattern of deception and an imbalance of power that undermined the potential for authentic dialogue on this topic. There was an exception to this rule, and it consisted of two mediated online discussion forums of residents of Estonia (both Estonian and Russian) and foreign Holocaust-issue advocates hosted by the newspaper *Eesti Ekspress*. While these dialogues were part of the broader data set assembled in the multi-sited ethnography, the direct and open exchange of ideas in these forums invited further direct analysis. These dialogues provide great insight into the gaps in understanding between the different perspectives on the Holocaust in part because both sides spoke directly to each other. Whether questioners were hostile or sympathetic, their questions accusatory or informational, they all attempted to articulate perceived flaws in one side's or the other's reasoning or values. In the process, they revealed a set of assumptions and norms that separate the two groups. Though the exchanges were relatively brief, lasting perhaps an hour each, they are rich with examples that illuminate what Agar called 'rich points'. Participants laid out their most powerful arguments, revealed their perception of the other side's positions, appealed and probed the different value and fact claims each side made. These dialogues were examined systematically in order to identify the 'rich points' and, as far as possible, to understand the interrelated sets of values and beliefs that differed among the participants. For the purposes of this article, the selection of quotes was made according to which exchanges most

effectively illustrated these points. These exchanges help to provide a more complete understanding of the differences at work and compel us to consider the different categories of dialogue and discussion explored above.

Three major goals drove foreign engagement with Holocaust issues in Estonia: prosecution of Nazi war criminals and perpetrators of the Holocaust, commemoration of Holocaust victims, and education about the Holocaust. The U.S. Ambassador, Joseph Michael DeThomas, for example, proposed in a newspaper column three 'modest steps': prosecuting those who had committed crimes, recognizing that the Holocaust was part of Estonia's history, and teaching children about it (DeThomas, 2002). Efraim Zuroff advocated for a Holocaust memorial day and noted that when there are no longer living Nazis to prosecute, the SWC will shift its efforts to education about the Holocaust (Online Intervjuud, 2002). These goals were often conflated, and objections or obstacles to any one of them could inhibit progress on the other issues. Most troublesome for educational improvements regarding the Holocaust was the fact that both commemoration and potential prosecutions seemed to Estonians to imply a hierarchy of victims, in both cases in their eyes elevating what had been a small minority within the country while degrading Estonians.

If the goals were sometimes conflated, with negative outcomes for education, Estonians also seem to have conflated the advocates themselves and their institutions as well, rather than regarding them as truly distinct and independent groups. One questioner asked Zuroff to, "please describe the level of involvement and support from U.S. Government officials in this matter. How much has the SWC relied on the intervention of U.S. Government officialss [sic] with Estonian authorities in this matter or similar ones?"[5] For any Estonians who harbored anti-Semitic stereotypes including global conspiracies and string-pulling in global institutions, the strong emphasis on Holocaust issues by the U.S. ambassador and by NATO offered little to dispel their suspicions.

The concern about this prospective power was expressed by another questioner who feared that SWC might have the potential to undermine Estonian security from Russia by blocking its accession to NATO: "will you or SWC lobby any or all NATO member countries (officially or unofficially) against Estonia's admission into NATO or the EU?" while another found a possible motivation in this theory: "Why have you come out with your statements against Estonia and the Baltic States this year, is it related to the fact that on this fall Estonia can be invited to NATO?" (Online Intervjuud, 2002). Estonians thus perceived Zuroff and SWC as formidable threats to Estonian security, and with a half-century of Soviet rule fresh in their minds, often concluded that Zuroff served Russian interests and was either Russian himself or supported by subversive Russian authorities. Such conclusions to West-

ern ears are evocative of conspiracy theories that attribute to Jews an almost supernatural power to influence world events, as many apparently thought Zuroff could do.

The different conceptions of justice on display between the Estonians and those who favor the prosecution of Nazi war criminals have important educational implications. The evaluation of the crimes committed, the perception of their seriousness and significance, and the attribution of responsibility (or assertions of powerlessness) are closely connected to how those historical events are and will be understood and represented in the curriculum, in textbooks, and in classroom practice. This is particularly true since the high priority foreigners place on Nazi crimes implicitly rejects Estonian narratives of history, in which the Estonians were the primary victims, and instead frames (some) Estonians as criminals, even while seeming to endorse a version of history favored during Soviet times, a version in which the Nazis were the worst tyranny in world history and Estonians were generally fascists.

Zuroff, when encouraged to focus on informing and educating people rather than on making accusations, articulated the link between trials and education:

> We firmly believe that one of the best way to teach about the history of the Holocaust is to see to it that the criminals are put on trial in the countries in which they committed their crimes or in their countries of origin. These trials are the best history lesson imaginable (Online Intervjuud, 2002).

Certainly, the trial of Adolph Eichmann marked a turning point in Israel's knowledge of and attitudes towards the Holocaust (Gross, 2010). One challenge, considered below, is that Estonian Holocaust trials had been conducted by the Soviets, who were notorious for KGB-extracted confessions, concocted evidence, and show trials.

Estonians were frequently frustrated by foreigners' apparent ignorance of Soviet crimes and techniques, by their reliance on Soviet sources, by foreign conduct evocative of Soviet practices, and by a version of history uncomfortably similar to the version they had resisted under Soviet occupation.

When Zuroff discussed the educational benefits of trials, however, he inadvertently collided with another terrible memory of the Soviet period: show trials and concocted evidence. Estonians quizzed Zuroff about his reliance on Soviet sources, apparently further evidence that outsiders didn't understand the nature of the Soviet Union and its intrinsic untrustworthiness. One asked "what about the papers of the Soviet-era interrogations, do You see them as 100% valid?" and another "how do you evaluate the actions taken by the KGB in investigating the nazi crimes?" A third more bluntly claimed that, "no Estonian who served in German army escaped from the NKVD and it's sucsessor [sic] KGB. Many of them where given death

sentence in the Soviet Union based on huge propaganda," while a fourth asked, "why are many of your accusations based on KGB materials, even though it is widely known that many of them are fabricated?" Zuroff replied that, "much of this material is genuine and quite valuable. You have to remember that the Soviets were the ones who investigated the crimes shortly after they took place so they were in the best position to collect important evidence" and, "much of the material collected by the KGB about the cases of Nazi war criminals and collaborators is 100% reliable," while conceding that "the problem is in those cases in which the charges were political" (Online Intervjuud, 2002).

These dilemmas fit what I term the paradox of legitimacy. Because the Soviet Union's evils are so familiar in Estonia, anything associated with the Soviets lacked legitimacy. Anything based on evidence collected by the Soviets was suspect. Any events that fit the propagandistic view of the war promoted by the Soviets were inherently untrustworthy for Estonians. New or contradictory information will be rejected if it does not ring true to us; however, it often fails to ring true because of broader attitudes or perceptions we have absorbed. In the case of the evidence of the Holocaust in the post-Soviet region, the very fact that the Soviets obtained it undermines its credibility in the region. This is the paradox of legitimacy.

Zuroff's reliance on Soviet evidence was in the eyes of Estonians exacerbated by his apparent adoption of a popular Soviet method:

> By offering money in exchange for information, Zuroff also unwittingly invoked the much-despised idea of denunciation, which had been introduced in Estonia mainly by the Soviets (Weiss-Wendt, 2008, p. 484).

In Estonian eyes, it was not only highly problematic to trust Soviet evidence, but much worse still to ignore Soviet crimes.

Among the most pervasive objections expressed by Estonians on Holocaust issues was a perceived application of selective justice. When there is a focus on a certain set of crimes, victims, perpetrators, or even countries to the apparent exclusion of others, it communicates messages about who is seen to matter and who doesn't. The perception of selective justice was expressed to the U.S. ambassador in the following terms,

> While this writer fully acknowledges the horror of what the Nazis and their accomplices did to Jews, Gypsies and Estonians during the three years of German WW II occupation of Estonia, the number of lives lost and the duration of the combined Soviet occupations enormously eclipse the Nazi period … When will the US begin funding an Office of Soviet Investigations or an Office of Communist Investigations designed to systematically condemn and bring to jutice [sic] the few surviving communist war criminals, torturers and executioners who terrorized Central and Eastern Europe … Surely it must be the gravity of the offenses and even-handed consistency of approach that interests the US government – a country that practices and advocates the rule of law – and not the ethnic origin or

> the religious orientation of the victims? Even-handedness is what we're asking for. Most Estonians are in agreement that German atrocities and Soviet Russian atrocities must be handled using the same legal yardsticks, and that the consequences for the perpetrators should be the same (Online Intervjuud, 2003).

This expression shows clearly the common perception that the emphasis on Holocaust crimes was rooted in the identity of the victims, whether religious or ethnic, rather than on the nature of the crimes themselves (genocide). The conception of justice is also linked to the context, the notion that the Holocaust was considerably less significant within Estonia than other crimes. If the U.S. were committed to law and justice, the reasoning goes, it would not focus exclusively on smaller scale crimes to the exclusion of larger scale crimes.

Zuroff acknowledged that "it is only natural for Jewish organizations like SWC to try and bring Nazi criminals to justice given the terrible crimes they committed against the Jewish people". Questioners had more difficulty understanding the American emphasis on the Holocaust. Given how deep and pervasive were concerns about perceived selective justice, more attention to this effort would surely have been helpful. DeThomas explained that,

> the legal structures the US government pursues regarding the Holocaust are unique to that particular set of crimes. In large part, this is because many survivors of the Holocaust fled to the US and are now U.S. citizens. They look to U.S. law for redress. Similarly, many perpetrators of the Holocaust fled to the U.S. under false pretenses and obtained U.S. citizenship. We needed a special legal structure to deal with these individuals (Online Intervjuud, 2003).

The pursuit of justice will not be realized as Nazi war criminals – and Soviet war criminals – are permitted to die off. As they do die off, though, the foreign emphasis on Nazi crimes will cease to complicate efforts to educate about the Holocaust. The differing conceptions of justice will have the greatest impact not on questions of prosecution and extradition but rather on representations of history.

11. Conclusions

This article has explored Habermas's three human interests and dialogue, which contrasts with debates and discussions. We applied these ideas to Holocaust education and its goal of transforming racist views. Habermas's interests address understanding and self-transformation, but do not help us to conceptualize the transformation of others. Though distinguishing the three interests has heuristic value, they are tightly interwoven in Holocaust education. Dialogue takes place under special but elusive conditions, particularly in contentious issues. The peer review process revealed to me that I had been working with implicit theories of dialogue and transformation without realizing it, and that I had maintained a deep faith in dialogue

though I had no empirical evidence to support my view. The author's commitment to dialogue, it became clear, rested on an ethical rather than an empirical foundation.

Because the advocates of dialogue suggest that an orientation of good will is necessary for authentic dialogue, one participant could be engaged in dialogue while another is debating. The same exchange must be characterized differently based on the orientation of the participant. Together, these issues lead to a central problem or concern: how can individuals who embrace an ethical position of openness to dialogue, self-knowledge and transformation engage others who do not share this view in potentially transformative experiences or dialogues? In part, the exchanges are not so clearly dialogue or discussion, as the terminology may suggest. We need room for conflict, for disagreement. Indeed, the concept of cognitive dissonance may apply: even in a debate, a critic may score a point that punctures a hole, once that must be repaired. In cognitive dissonance, someone comes to believe two contradictory things at the same time and must work through the conflict.

I have attempted to develop some metaphors of transformation that help to address the problem. They involve an image of cultural transformation as the unraveling or cutting and subsequent reweaving of a tapestry of views, both theoretical and normative. I close, in the epilogue, by attempting to apply some of these ideas to the specific, real scenarios with which the paper opened.

Notes

1. He is referring to the truckdriver Reginald Denny, whose severe beating was filmed from a news helicopter. The mob also attacked Latino and Asian motorists, which did not fit his narrative, nor the national media coverage, for whom the beating of one white man seemed to trump the deaths of 53 people during the riots.
2. I use as a model and inspiration for this piece the work of Frances C. Fowler (2006), whose discussion of the interrelated evolution of her research and her own thinking over many years was very helpful.
3. The article and video are available here: http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/06/03/lithuania.nazi.prosecutions/index.html
4. The Prague Declaration can be read here: http://praguedeclaration.org/ This site features critiques: http://www.holocaustinthebaltics.com/182423/index.html
5. Since this article is focused on illustrating key aspects of broadly-shared Estonians' perspectives in relation to the Holocaust rather than on the responses per se, I do not always quote the answers, many of which will be obvious to the reader. In cases like this in which the answer is not immediately evident, I do. Zuroff replied that, "the US government is quite active on these issues without our involvement. It obviously helps our efforts if they agree with our objectives and work toward their fulfillment" (Online Intervjuud, 2002).

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