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To cite this article: Ola Flennegård & Christer Mattsson (2023) Democratic pilgrimage: Swedish students' understanding of study trips to Holocaust memorial sites, Educational Review, 75:3, 429-446, DOI: [10.1080/00131911.2021.1931040](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2021.1931040)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2021.1931040>



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Published online: 14 Jun 2021.



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Democratic pilgrimage: Swedish students' understanding of study trips to Holocaust memorial sites

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on Swedish students' understanding of study trips to Holocaust memorial sites. Although about a quarter of all Swedish teenagers visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum each year, with the majority visiting as students as part of their school curriculum, this study is the first to examine these study trips from a student perspective. By applying critical discourse analysis, this article analyses 49 students' reflections, written before, during, and after two study trips. The results suggest that the study trips' discursive practice, which constitutes and is constituted by the study trips' social practice, is regulated by a discursive order termed *democratic pilgrimage*. In addition, this article reveals two didactic deviations from previous research on study trips: the students' positive feelings in relation to the Polish environment and the balance between victim and perpetrator perspectives. The latter creates tension within the students and is solved via articulations of democratic values.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 6 November 2020

Accepted 13 May 2021

KEYWORDS

Education; pedagogy; teaching and learning about the Holocaust; Holocaust education; democracy; study trips

Introduction

As membership in the European Union (EU) has been extended to include additional member states, the Holocaust in European historical culture has been framed as a tenet representing a dark but shared past, contrasting an imagined bright European future (Karlsson, 2010). As a neutral country during World War II, Sweden did not emphasise its relation to the Holocaust until the mid-1990s, when it became a member of the EU. However, by taking initiative in what later became The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 1998, leading to the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum in 2000, Sweden took on a pioneering role in promoting the importance of not only commemorating the Holocaust but also educating young people about Holocaust history (Holmila & Kvist Geverts, 2011). The Swedish government also founded a state agency, The Living History Forum, for the purpose of Holocaust commemoration and education (Selling, 2011). As part of Swedish engagement with the European Holocaust memory, the number of Swedish students taking part in study trips to Holocaust memorial sites has continuously increased. In recent years, about one fourth of all Swedish teenagers visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland. The vast

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majority of these teenagers are students undertaking study trips to the historical site, other similar institutions, and memorial sites as part of their school curriculum (Flennegård, 2018).

Despite the active involvement of the Swedish government in supporting Holocaust education, there is no centralised system, such as unified curricula or guidelines regulating Swedish study trips to Holocaust memorial sites, nor are there any dominant organisations arranging the study trips. Indeed, the study trips may be seen as a grassroots movement located within Swedish schools, driven by dedicated teachers and students. In addition to the increasing numbers of Swedish study trips, the extended length of several days of each study trip, due to travel distance is noteworthy. However, to date, no research has been conducted on these study trips from the perspective of students.

Previous research on study trips in different national contexts found that many trips are conducted by dominant national organisations or are regulated by governmental guidelines, with such research emphasising student negotiation of study trips' meaning in accordance with the aims of their educational institutions (Alba, 2015; Cowan & Maitles, 2011; Fanjoy, 2018; Feldman, 2010; Kverndokk, 2007). Additionally, a comprehensive literature review conducted by the IHRA highlights the need for qualitative studies on Holocaust education, including studies that focus on student perspectives as well as learning and meaning-making processes "and how they support or challenge broader national narratives and senses of identity" (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2017, p. 286).

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine Swedish study trips to Holocaust memorial sites, as a specific learning practice viewed from the student perspective, in order to provide insight into the meaning-making processes of study trips that are not formally regulated by outside organisations or government guidelines. The study is based on students' reflections written in diaries before, during, and after two different study trips to Poland in the winter of 2018. In total, 474 written reflections from 49 students were analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Since this is the first study to consider the educational experiences and meaning-making processes of Swedish students visiting Holocaust memorial sites, this research is explorative in nature. The study trips are a well-known feature of Swedish education among teachers and students (Flennegård, 2018), with each study trip framed by preconceptions about the anticipated intellectual and emotional impact of such trips. Thus, this study focuses on articulations of these changes. It assumes that articulations of expected change occur before the study trip, then have significance for how articulations evolve during the trip, and how they afterwards constitute a resource for the students to measure the outcome of their intellectual and emotional changes. In addition, this study considers the social dimensions of the study trips, as the students spend several days in a foreign country with their peers and teachers. According to CDA, discursive practices (students' and teachers' use of language), constitute and are constituted by the social practice (Fairclough, 1992). Hence, this study focuses on discursive practices as an important part of the students' meaning-making processes of the study trips. Thus, this study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do the students' expectations of participating in a study trip to Holocaust memorial sites correspond to their comments during and after the study trip?

RQ2: How do the students assess the social educational settings of the study trips?

RQ3: How can learning and meaning-making processes during the study trips be understood in terms of discursive practices?

By focusing on the unique educational setting of Swedish study trips, the results of this study increase contemporary knowledge of how students' learning about the Holocaust and democracy evolves, when exposed to memorial sites of extreme historical events. Particularly, this study provides insight into the significance of the quality of social safety, developed between students before and during study trips.

Literature review

Certain historical events may attract the attention of national educational researchers; however, only the Holocaust has generated an international field of educational research. Over the last two decades, the research field Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust (TLH), also termed Holocaust education, has grown substantially (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2017). Two fundamentals characterise TLH. First, TLH is not only education about a historical event. Rather, students "experience the Holocaust as qualitatively different from other topics they encounter, and teachers similarly find that teaching about the Holocaust poses certain challenges and creates special opportunities that are not present when they are teaching other historical events" (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2017, p. 286).

In recent decades, social science textbooks around the world increasingly frame the Holocaust through the lens of democracy and human rights education (Bromley & Russell, 2010). This trend reflects increased public attention to TLH as a vehicle for human rights and democracy promotion, suggesting that there are lessons to be learned from the Holocaust that are relevant for future generations. However, in practice, the educational process is not always easily implemented:

Educators who deal with such issues on a daily basis find that they, and their students, have strong expectations in this regard. Nevertheless, they often say it is very difficult to teach about both the Holocaust and human rights in one school programme, during one visit, or within one project. (Eckmann, 2015, p. 54)

Thus, expectations about the impact of TLH and the strong commitment by teachers and students do not always correspond with educational outcomes. The discrepancy may be attributed to the "distinction between importance and effectiveness", a distinction not maintained when TLH is valued and discussed (Stevick & Michaels, 2013, p. 7). This means that engagement is regarded as an important element in teaching and learning processes about the Holocaust, and is significant to encourage if one wants young people to keep Holocaust memory alive via education, but does not ensure fulfilment of curricula goals.

Second, though TLH appears to be spreading globally in the form of curricula and textbooks on the subject, national framing remains fundamental for how TLH is shaped in a specific context. National historical culture, along with political incentives, work to shape educational content of TLH (Bromley & Russell, 2010; Carrier et al., 2015). Further, within a specific national context, teachers possess a range of knowledge and educational objectives regarding TLH (Eckmann, 2010; Foster, 2013). According to a survey of 8,000 participants, such variety is true for Swedish teachers (Lange, 2008). Nonetheless, this survey also

demonstrated that Swedish teachers' overarching purpose when conducting Holocaust education is democracy promotion. Another study, using interviews and classroom observations, revealed that teachers developed five different teaching approaches, but each teacher did not use more than one or two of them: "The general picture that one can derive from the teachers' statements is that the Holocaust as a field of knowledge constitutes a very complicated material within the teaching of history" (Wibaeus, 2010, p. 248). The teachers' common goal, however, is to "connect information of the Holocaust and its history with issues of fundamental democratic values" (Wibaeus, 2010, p. 250; Ammert, 2015). Importantly, existing research suggests that students appear to be left out of explanatory understandings of the Holocaust and, while being exposed to highly emotional content, risk becoming absorbed in the suffering of the victims (Wibaeus, 2010).

Though there is a considerable amount of research on the relationship between democracy and Swedish schools and on how the democratic framing of the Swedish curricula positions teachers (e.g. Cooper, 2019), there is no empirical research on the relationship between public Holocaust discourse and educational content in Sweden. However, Pearce (2017) demonstrated strong connections between public discourse on the Holocaust and educational content in the case of England, and there is no reason to believe that Sweden is an exception to these interplays. Thus, it is relevant to note that a central part of public Swedish cultural construction of national identity is the concept of Sweden as a leading nation of democracy and human rights promotion (Harding, 2007). This may contribute to frame TLH through the lens of democratic education. Whether and how robust results from historical research on Sweden's complex relationship to the Holocaust during the Second World War (e.g. Åmark, 2016; Kvist Geverts, 2008; Levine, 1998; Rudberg, 2015) are a part of Swedish TLH has yet to be researched.

Previous research on study trips to Holocaust memorial sites are of particular relevance to the present study. Research on Scottish student study trips organised via the United Kingdom programme Lessons from Auschwitz (LFA) indicates that students can obtain deeper understandings of both Holocaust history and the importance of human rights through a single programme (Cowan & Maitles, 2011). However, the study does not analyse any student responses or observations made as the programme unfolds in real time, and LFA consists of only a single day trip to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

The educational setting is different during lengthier study trips. Since 1988, Israeli upper secondary students can voluntarily participate in eight-day study trips to Holocaust memorial sites in Poland. With respect to knowledge acquisition, Romi and Lev (2007) demonstrate that there are no long-term effects in terms of knowledge about the Holocaust. However, Lazar et al. (2004) note the methodological constraints of quantitative research on study trips. Researchers employing quantitative methods cannot rely on simple categorisation approaches, as participants often claim they are "unable to put into words their feelings or their views . . . due to . . . an emotionally-draining journey to the death and concentrations camps" (Lazar et al., 2004, p. 29). As such, qualitative approaches to study trips, such as ethnographical research, are of particular utility.

Feldman's (2010) ethnographic study of Israeli study trips suggests such trips should be analysed as national pilgrimages. Through the national pilgrimage lens, the study trips become scripted ritual passages, in which students' transition from children to adult members of the Israeli nation, come to pass via identification with Holocaust survivors accompanying each study trip. The study trips are led by Israeli guides and include visits

to many different sites, such as former Jewish quarters, ghettos, and shtetls, Jewish cemeteries, and several former concentration and extermination camps. The Israeli guides lead students through the sites and facilitate commemoration ceremonies and student discussions. The bus and hotels that the students use, are mentally constructed as safe and good spheres representing Israeli life and home in the present, while the death camps and the broader Polish environment are associated with danger and evil representative of past death and alienation. Thus, the didactic strategy of the students' transition is founded on exposing them to the differences of spatial dichotomies in order to strengthen their positive understanding of present Israel. The ritual passage is meant to be completed when returning home. "Through their transmission of the experience to family and friends upon their return, they become witnesses of the witness, bearers of the legacy entrusted them" (Feldman, 2010, p. 257).

Within the context of the Jewish diaspora, Fanjoy (2018) found that students adopting the victims' perspective is of central importance to study trips for young Jewish people from Toronto. The participants, encouraged by their instructors, enter the history of the Holocaust through the embodiment of the victims' perspective, which ultimately produces a situational dichotomy. "In the absence of Nazis, local Poles surrounding the students become placeholders for the perpetrators and bystanders . . . and the landscape of Poland itself becomes threatening" (Fanjoy, 2018, p. 238). The students' experience of this dichotomy is highly emotional, and cognitive processes related to an explanatory understanding of the Holocaust are downplayed. The purpose of these study trips is identity building and the applied didactic strategy to accomplish this is to encourage identification with the Jewish victims (Fanjoy, 2018). Alba (2015) found that study trips for young Jewish people from Australia "and other similar programs do produce an affective connection and hence generate emotional identification. Deep learning, however, is less apparent" (p. 134).

Since Jewish people were the victims of the Holocaust, study trips for Jewish students may be presumed to have unique features. It is, therefore, noteworthy that Kverndokk (2007), in his ethnography of Norwegian study trips, observes the construction of a dichotomy of spatial spheres similar to those observed by Feldman (2010) and Fanjoy (2018). These eight-day trips only feature visits to former concentration and extermination camps in Poland and Germany. The trips are arranged and led by a non-governmental organisation. At the sites, museum guides lead the groups, with structured discussions not part of the visits. The students' meaning-making processes take place as negotiations between three genres – the school trip, the tourist trip, and the pilgrimage – with the students intended to learn how to shift between genres across circumstances and places visited during the study trip. The ultimate goal for the students is, after returning home, to perform the scripted maturity of pilgrimage while bearing witness from the study trip and, thereby, become a member of an adult community of Holocaust commemoration (Kverndokk, 2007). The narrative of Jews as victims of the Holocaust is interspersed with non-Jewish Norwegian victimhood during the Second World War. The firm and emotional focus on the victims' suffering results in "a moral obligation" on behalf of the students "to *not* grasp" what caused the Holocaust (Kverndokk, 2009, p. 79; authors' translation; emphasis in original).

Although not clear cut, previous research illuminates five main features of TLH and study trips to Holocaust memorial sites that are relevant to this study of Swedish students' engagement with Holocaust education study trips. First, national historical culture and

political incentives affect the educational content of TLH. Second, Swedish national identities are connected to Swedish TLH as framed by democratic intentions. Third, emotions generally play an important part in Holocaust education; however, connected to practical experiences *in situ*, there is a risk of strong emotions bypassing cognitive mechanisms. Fourth, this is at least partly due to the preference of understanding history from the victim's perspective, rather than experiencing explanatory Holocaust education. Fifth, at study trips to Holocaust memorial sites that are institutionalised, basic foundations are constructed from which meaning of the trips is generated and didactic strategies depart. Two salient such constructions, found by previous research, are spatial dichotomising and ritual passage.

Materials and methods

Data generation and collection

This study analysed 49 students' written reflections from two study trips in the winter of 2018. The students, 33 girls and 16 boys, were 14 to 15 years old and in eighth grade. They voluntarily applied for extra-curricular education conducted during school time. The students participated in nine meetings of four hours each over the course of seven months, with the meetings led by three teachers with experience from one previous year of leading the local programme. The educational content of the meetings consisted of Holocaust education, including aspects on national socialist politics, antisemitism as a driving force of the Holocaust, as well as democracy and human rights education. All of the meetings ended with students writing reflections on the educational content. The students were informed about the study trip by previous programme participants, at that time in their ninth grade at the same school, and by the three teachers. Some of the students also had older siblings, parents, relatives, or friends who had been to Holocaust memorial sites.

Each of the two study trips to Holocaust memorial sites in Poland spanned eight days and included visits to two former Jewish quarters, one former shtetl, two Jewish cemeteries, one former ghetto, one former mass killing site, three different former concentration and extermination camps, and one former SS-compound. The students were guided throughout the study trip by one of the teachers who is also an author of this article, except for three hours in Auschwitz I, where the museum's guide together with the teacher leads the students. Due to the timing of the trips, the sites were most often empty of other visitors, except at Auschwitz I. This meant that discussions about both historical and moral issues could be held *in situ*, during which the students also wrote their reflections.

On two occasions, the students were given reflection prompts: "Why go to empty places?" and "What is evil?" However, the majority of the reflection prompts began with "I am at [name of site]". The time assigned for each reflection ranged between five to fifteen minutes. The discussions often continued at evening sessions, which began with the students being encouraged to share their written reflections in smaller groups.

This study chose as its unit of analysis the written reflections from the last meeting (two weeks before the study trip), where the students were invited to write about their expectations for the trips, as well as student reflections from the trip itself. Additionally, reflections written at the beginning of a meeting two weeks after the trip were included for analysis. In total, there were 11 opportunities for student reflection that were analysed in

this study. Due to practical circumstances, the average number of completed reflections was 10 per student. In total, the selected reflections consist of 37,482 Swedish words and an average of 765 words per student; however, the length of each reflection differed considerably across students. All instructions for writing the reflections, as well as for reading them, were issued by one of the teachers, who is not one of the authors of this article.

Though one of the authors was part of the teaching team, there were decisive reasons for using the texts as units of analysis. The most important factor was that the texts were produced as part of a learning process, without any research purpose guiding their production at the time. Thus, the texts were created independent of any research intervention.

Another salient reason for using the written reflections was the absence of formal aspects, such as marking or grading of the texts. Preparatory meetings made the students aware that one of the teachers would be reviewing all of their reflections, making short written comments, and reading some of the anonymised reflections aloud to the whole group during the following meeting. This meant that the teacher's choice of which reflections to read aloud influenced the students' discursive practices by emphasising specific articulations over others. In other words, through written language, the texts articulated the students' intellectual, emotional, and social experiences of educational content and the study trips overall, largely free from formal constraints, but were informed by the teachers' and other students' words. Each written reflection is thereby a link in a text-chain where keywords and phrases circulate, rather than isolated articulations of a single student.

During the extra-curricular education, with permission from the students and their parents, the texts were copied, creating an anonymised archive at the local school administration council. According to the principle of public access to official records in Sweden, the archive's texts were available for research and treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines of The Swedish Research Council (2017). Thus, all anonymised texts were copied on paper that did not contain any information of names or any other identifying details. The students were given fictitious names for this study. All quotations from the students' reflections in this article were translated into English by the authors to retain English grammar and idiomatic expressions.

Method of analysis

The students' reflections are written accounts of their individual intellectual, emotional, and social experiences of the study trips. At the same time, they provide insight into the social practices of the study trips, which are a part of the local extra-curricular education that in itself is framed by Swedish national TLH discourse. This motivated the use of CDA, both as a theoretical framework and methodological engine, since language in texts is, according to CDA, an irreducible portion of social life. "There are social reasons for combining particular signifiers with particular signifieds" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 75).

CDA separates all communicative events into three closely related layers. The first layer is the text. It consists of all verbal and nonverbal expressions and is a coded form of the second layer, the discursive practice. This second layer should be analysed with respect to how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed, particularly with respect to the third layer, the social practice. CDA understands discourse as both constituting and constituted regarding its relation to social practice; the social practice precedes the

discursive practice, but the latter then shapes the former. This means that the discursive and social practices are continuously interrelated with each other when discourses are shaped. Rooted in critical realism, CDA gives agency to actors to create new discourses and shape existing ones, but only to the extent of what is possible within the actors' social structure where the communicative events take place (Fairclough, 2010).

In CDA, the discourse function of creating systems of knowledge and meaning interrelates with two other functions: the creation of social identities and social relations (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2000). This is important when analysing particular discourses, since what may be said relates to who is saying what to whom, all regulated by the hegemonic discursive practice within the domain, termed the discursive order. This article identifies and analyses patterns of discursive practice in the students' written reflections with respect to the students' intellectual, emotional, and social experiences during the study trips. In relation to the teaching, discussions and writing in situ, as well as discussions and sharing of reflections at evening sessions, the written reflections are accounts of a temporal evolving discursive practice created by students and teachers throughout the study trips. The aim is to understand these patterns in terms of eventual discursive orders that regulate the discursive practice, which, according to CDA, is in a dialectic relation to the social practice of Swedish study trips to Holocaust memorial sites.

In order to examine the relation between the discursive and social practices, this study applies the concept of ritual passage based on Turner's (1969) theory of community participants leaving their original status and, through a liminal phase, receiving a new social status as they perform according to a script. Though the script is regulated, it leaves room for creativity and alternative articulations (Turner, 1969).

CDA was carried out over the course of three phases. Since one of the authors was part of the teaching team, it was necessary to conduct a separate stepwise analysis of the material. First, the two authors independently analysed all the written reflections for *manifest textuality* with respect to TLH-content according to the pre-study trip preparations. This meant identifying keywords and phrases about the Holocaust, democracy, and human rights. Since previous research highlights five features of TLH, Swedish TLH, and study trips to Holocaust memorial sites, particular attention was paid to these. After discussions between the authors, the decision was made to scrutinise four themes: the students' understandings of 1) victims and perpetrators; 2) democracy and human rights; 3) moral issues; and 4) being abroad in a group. The material was split between the authors, with one author analysing 25 reflections and the other author analysing the remaining 24 reflections.

Second, *intertextuality* was examined between reflections written before, during, and after the study trips to find patterns regarding the four identified themes and the evolution of these themes over the course of the study trips. This meant establishing *transitivity*, that is, how the students positioned themselves as subjects in relation to the themes. The authors then compared their observations and discussed how the overarching transitivity could be conceptualised. Third, according to the logic of CDA, changes in the discursive practice constitute and are constituted by the social practice. If one can argue the existence of a discursive order with respect to the study trips, this order must regulate content in relation to perceived social change. Thus, the authors analysed the students' written reflections in order to understand the students' articulations of intellectual, emotional, and social changes.

Results

This study's findings are presented in three sections. The first section focuses on the students' expectations before the study trips and how the students started to develop a script. The second section presents intertextual connections between students' expectations of the socio-educational setting and challenging educational content. The third section analyses the students' assessments after having completed the trips, in relation to the study trips, as a discursive practice.

Being privileged – preparing to become vulnerable together

The students anticipated that taking part in a study trip to Holocaust memorial sites would be a unique experience. All students were asked to write about their expectations before the study trips. Various expectations were articulated and clear patterns emerged. For many students, it was unusual to go abroad, without parents and in some cases at all.

I'm looking forward to flying. (Fredrika)

I want to explore every inch of the hotel rooms where we will live. (Greta)

I'm really looking forward to it, and I'm so happy about it. I have never been outside Scandinavia, except Ireland when I was two years old. This is definitely something new to me. (Ida)

What I look forward to most, I think, will be the meals we will have and the evenings [to share]. This is what will distinguish the trip from regular school. (Ronja)

The students were grateful for the opportunity to go abroad and explore Polish culture, with no other references to the journey as such, as an adventure. Staying at hotels, eating at restaurants, being on an airplane were described as exciting and breaking the everyday routine. Breaking this routine and doing something that most of their peers do not do also provided them with a sense of being different in a good way, of being selected and privileged. This is in line with other comments that talk about the opportunity to share the experience with peers in the group.

I'm really excited and I'm 100 % convinced that this will be one of the most memorable trips in my life. To be able to share it with my very best friend and this safe group is just wonderful. (Hanna)

It will be great to get to know the Polish culture and to get to know all my peers in the group. (Erik)

I look forward to all the evenings together with the group. (Lina)

From the outset, the trip was understood as a collective and shared experience, different from regular school, which is much more individualised. Expressions of closeness, openness, and co-operation filled their anticipations, rather than competition for grades and recognition. This allowed them to open up and prepare for what they expected to be a journey in sorrow and darkness with strong emotional reactions.

However, I do believe that it will all be very sad and there is a big risk that I will feel gloomy. (Erika)

It will be both fun and sad. The fun part is to be there with your friends, and the sad is that I know that I will be very emotional at those sites. (Cecilia)

I am scared. I am so terribly scared. And nervous about what this trip will do to me . . . But I am not only scared . . . I have many friends in this group. (Dora)

I am nervous because we will go to sites where terrible things have happened . . . I am glad to do this with all [of the students] in this group and all the adults. (Klara)

Student anticipation of significant encounters with the Holocaust sites, in combination with articulations of being embedded within a caring group of students and teachers, created expectancies of fundamental personal change.

This will be a trip I will carry with me for the rest of my life. (Johanna)

I think this trip is more important than I can understand right now. (Björn)

I hope I will be a different person when I get back home. (Nina)

In the preoperational phase of the study trip, the students developed a script of anticipation of how the trip would play out, and the expected hardships seem to justify the fun that they also anticipated. The changing potential of the script is a matter of the students' expectations and willingness to become something they cannot fully anticipate and control. Thus, the script could be seen as a ritual passage: the students have prepared themselves as a group, making them worthy of treading on horrible sites, and they are willing to share their vulnerability with each other as they would not do in a regular teaching session in the classroom.

Being exposed to human behaviour – preparing to change

After a few days in Poland, the students had already produced several written reflections about the educational content, their learning, spending time together with their peers, and about "how incredibly beautiful Poland is" (Ida). Naturally, the texts were written as individual responses to a collective experience. The themes of going abroad in a group are interwoven with previous notes, reflections from peers, and expectations before the trip. More important is that the reflections also show that the script they had developed beforehand was challenged by the educational content that focused on victims and perpetrators. The cognitive process was more central than what could be expected from the notes before the study trips.

What I will remember from today is that humans have this tendency to picture themselves as rather innocent and try to find explanations for one's deeds. If you break a moral boundary, you just go ahead and make a new boundary, further away in order to be able to live with yourself. This I will remember from the teaching today. (Anders)

The notes became longer and, even if emotional expressions were there, they were filled with new insights. The insights were almost always connected to specific sites and historical characters, but may be general in their psychological and moral conclusions, as the one above, or more personal.

I did not think that it should be all that emotional, or that I should cry. . . . It is really much more emotional to be at the sites and listen to the narratives than being at home. There is one

thing that I really will carry with me and that is that I am so utterly poor to regret [my own wrong doings] and to show remorse. When I heard about Franz [Stangl, a high-ranking SS-officer] and how it ended, I became upset with myself. You really have to be able to regret things and that is not a weakness, to show that you are wrong. (Beata)

Through the historical characters, the students started to reflect upon themselves, not necessarily by comparing deeds or situations, but by understanding psychological mechanisms of how humans may handle guilt, responsibility, and similar conditions. The connections were not only drawn to their own persona, but also to general conclusions on what the world should be like.

It feels so terrible to be at the very site where it happened [a mass shooting site in southern Poland]. It feels unreal. It is so quiet and it is hard to imagine that 1500 people were murdered here. Horrifying is what it is! My thoughts go to all who were buried here and I really do not think that this is what the world should be like. (Hans)

When the students reflected upon the perpetrators, they tended to draw conclusions about themselves and their behaviour and responsibility. When they instead reflected upon the suffering of the victims, they tended to reflect upon what the world should be like. There were also reflections on abstract notions such as “evil”.

Nobody is born evil, but everybody could become evil. (Edit)

I think evil is something that evolves over time. (Anna)

I think evil can evolve and spread among many human beings. (Åsa)

You get a general sense that ordinary people did the most horrible things. (Dagmar)

When the students positioned themselves as similar to all human beings, they ascribed a destructive potential of “evil” to themselves. This created a moral tension within them, and they sought a sanctuary, which was provided by the script of learning about human rights and democracy.

It is important to learn how to keep evil at bay, otherwise one might do something one would regret. (Amanda)

My heart aches when I think of how little these men cared about human dignity. This has changed my worldview COMPLETELY. (Johanna)

I think all of us have evil inside. ... There was a group of people [the perpetrators] who thought they were better than other people. ... What they did was wrong, and we know that today. That is why we are here today: to learn that what happened here should not happen again. (Cecilia)

All human beings have the same value but in the concentration camps they got none/ ... /remember and pass along [the history] so things will never happen again. We can make an impact on the future. (Celia)

As in Cecilia’s quote, they were given agency to control the evil inside, when taking the path to contribute to a collective avoidance of future human mass atrocities and maintain their own moral purity.

When the students relate to the complexity of human behaviour, basic categories such as victims and perpetrators are useful, and the students often connected these to the

national categories Jewish and German. In this context, it is worth reflecting on how the students were positioned, and positioned themselves, in relation to their Swedish nationality. In fact, the different forms of *Sweden* (Swedish: *Sverige*) occur 2 times out of 37,482 words and are not related to educational content.

A study trip can be understood as a socio-educational institution, that is both about cognitive learning and social and emotional growth. It is hard, based on the data from this study, to discuss any programme theory for this particular socio-educational experience. However, it is possible to say something about the mechanisms that enable the institution to operate based on the textual and intertextual content so far. The students initially develop a script for how they anticipate the study trip to play out, a necessity to allow them to get closer to their peers, even if this is still just on the surface. Getting closer to their peers is then enacted by showing emotions collectively, something that is not thinkable for most of them as something to be done in school.

You learn to know how a school class in fact should be. You should be safe. (Cecilia)

A life experience, embedded in a lot of knowledge. To be able to know your feelings and grasp the whole of them. Obviously, better than in ordinary school. (Klas)

Anguish and disgust . . . But I love doing this with our group. (Fredrika)

The trip gives you feelings . . . The trip pulls us closer, we become friends. We understand and comfort each other, if needed. (Daniel)

While being willing to show their vulnerability, they also become willing to be self-critical, and, thereby, to learn from the perpetrator perspective; not by equating themselves with the perpetrator or putting themselves in their positions but rather by being willing to understand, and not only judge, how people justify their wrongdoings. As such, the students draw conclusions of general meaning about individual psychological reactions towards remorse and guilt.

Being at home – becoming a democratic pilgrim

As they left Poland and returned home, the students continued to write their reflections. Articulations about how to relate to the perpetrators and the importance of knowledge about the Holocaust were now fixed, as were the central conclusions emerging from their trip to Poland.

I think you should do this trip to understand what really happened during the Holocaust, that it was not just Hitler. . . I did this trip because I wanted to learn more about the Holocaust. (Ida)

I have also learnt much more than about the Holocaust, for example, how people live their lives in Poland. (Signe)

You should do this trip to learn what really happened during the Holocaust and to be able to tell about it to others and because it is always nice to travel to Poland. (Erik)

Since the Holocaust as an absolute moral point of reference was crucial to what they viewed as their own change, they also wanted others to experience *in situ* learning. That included going to Poland, a country to which they ascribed positive connotations. The alternative, to articulate Poland as boring or even threatening, would contradict the script

of appreciating different cultures and pluralism. The script they developed before and the experiences during the study trip merged and articulated as a narrative of how they developed and grew as individuals. The students sensed that they share something unique, which they described as an insight of being different.

It felt so strange getting back home. Just like in *The Lord of the Rings* when the hobbits got back home and all those in their surroundings act like usual, but Frodo and his friends understand that they have changed. . . . People asked me what it was like and about things I had seen. I just could not explain to them. . . . I am really happy that I got to do this trip since I notice how much it has influenced me and that I have started to think differently about things. (Anna)

Change was articulated in relation to those who were not on the study trip: “EVERYTHING was as usual for them, but for me, everything had changed”, wrote Gabriella, adding, “everybody should be on a trip like this”. Though the students were clearly proud to have something in common that others did not, they stated the importance of extending this experience to others. All of the students reported optimism about the study trip as something that they would always remember and, more importantly, something that gave them new perspectives. In many cases, they also argued that they improved as humans.

It was indeed bewildering to get back home. It was eye-opening for me and I asked myself who I really am. A lot of people said that I behaved differently [in a positive way] when I got back home. (Amanda)

There is no reason to doubt the honesty of the students’ reporting on their experiences. However, it cannot be accepted at face value that the changes they talked about were as fundamental as they claimed, nor that they were connected to the study trip per se. The emotional experiences were important, but the safe environment provided by the peers was a precondition for the learning and experience process.

To provide reflection from my perceptive, [I would like to point out] that every day [during the study trip], I learnt more and more about myself, my fellow human beings, and mankind as a whole. . . . For every site we visited, I got to understand my emotions better. For every time we gathered, I learnt how important communion is. (Celia)

The script that they had already developed before going on the study trip played out according to their experiences. The emotions were there, the comforting peers and the cognitive challenging meeting with destructive and morally impaired history were all a part of the experience. Analysing the students’ text from a CDA perspective, it becomes clear that the study trip was not necessarily about being at the Holocaust memorial sites nor about having been there. It was about preparing to go there.

Why would anyone undertake a trip like this? It is a good question that I asked myself as I applied to the extra curricula. But after this trip, I have the answer. It changed the way I understand the world and my fellow human beings. (Karin)

Clearly, the students put their emphasis on the study trip: it was when they all had strong feelings and were allowed to act out of character and cry in front of their peers. This was made possible due to the script they developed before. The enactment of the script should be understood as a discursive practice of a study trip to Holocaust memorial sites, regulated by a discursive order. The teachers that had prior experience with study trips,

i.e. social practice, had a solid understanding of how students may or may not engage in the teaching and emotional settings. This formed a basis for how they prepared their students and made them look forward to being a part of an eye-opening experience. The students accepted this basis, thus developing a discursive practice, i.e. the script, about how things may and are allowed to play out, and what conclusions should be drawn from the study trip.

Discussion

From a CDA perspective, the analysis presents an example of how the students' awareness of social practice of previous study trips forms the discursive practice for the study trips in focus, thus contributing to constituting the social practice for students within this study. Undoubtedly, the experience from the conducted study trips added to the teacher's discursive repertoire for preparing future students. This constituting and constituted between the social and discursive practice within study trips to Holocaust memorial sites should, on a level of discursive order, be understood as *democratic pilgrimage*. This analytical conclusion starts with the students' articulations of fundamental change after the study trips as existential in character. These articulations correspond to their prior expectations that emanated from the context given by previous students and teachings prior to the study trips. The change is attributed to visiting the sites during the study trips, which made the students feel like privileged pilgrimages after returning home. Since there are no accounts of religious liturgy, the study trips may be viewed as secular pilgrimages.

Since this is the first study on Swedish study trips to Holocaust memorial sites from a student perspective, it is important to place the findings of this study within the context of previous research. Given previous research's emphasis on the importance of democratic framing as a motivation for Swedish TLH and that the students' accounts of their change are directed to mankind, it is reasonable to suggest the presence of a discursive order characterised by the ideational content of democracy and human dignity.

It is perhaps not surprising that the students' reflections articulate a script of a secular pilgrimage, resembling what was presented by ethnographies on Israeli and Norwegian study trips (Feldman, 2010; Kverndokk, 2007). Investing time and effort in extra-curricular pedagogic activities over several days in order to visit certain morally charged geographical locations is an interpellation of willingness among students to take part in reproducing and creating a discursive practice of intellectual, emotional, and social change. Otherwise, it becomes simply an ordinary tourist trip. Thus, developing the script supplies the study trip with significant meaning for teachers, the group as a whole, and, in the end, for individual students.

Similar to previous ethnographies, this study does not reveal the prolonged effects of study trips in terms of deep learning. However, the study reveals two deviations from important didactic strategies in previously analysed study trips, which helps understand the elasticity of pilgrimages and specificity of democratic values as a key concept of the study trips analysed in this study.

The first one is the students' relation to the Polish environment. In both the Israeli and the Norwegian study trips, the Polish landscape is ascribed negative connotations and serves to uphold a didactic dichotomy with the safe familiarity of the group versus the imagined "Poland". During the study trips for young Jewish people from Toronto, this

feature is extended to local Poles (Fanjoy, 2018). However, students in the present study wrote about their expectations of experiencing the Polish culture, and when in Poland, the positive concept was maintained. This contributed to the discursive practice of creating openness and pluralism as appreciated values within the group, a collective self-identification with core values of democracy.

The second didactic deviation from the Israeli and Toronto study trips is the balance between the victim and perpetrator perspective. The students in the present study wrote about the importance of spreading the message of “never again”, but they did not position themselves as witnesses or identify with the victims. Instead of entering history through the embodiment of the victim, they related themselves to both the victims and the perpetrators. Thereby, they became hosts of a tension between good and evil that had to be solved, and the script provided a solution by offering a safeguard of democratic articulations. This was enacted within the group during the study trip. The attribution to the study trip of these intellectual, emotional, and social processes was the reason the students articulated a sense of exclusiveness towards their friends and families when returning home. However, according to the democratic script, the students wrote that everyone should do what they themselves had just done. Thereby, the meaning of the study trip was extended beyond the group to the surrounding society, with the concept of democratic pilgrim exclusivity kept intact.

Turning to previous research on Holocaust education in Sweden, the study confirms that democratic lessons from the Holocaust continue to constitute the core of educational content; although, the present study does not explore teaching *per se*. Though the previous research pointed out the risk of students becoming absorbed in the suffering of the victims, this was not articulated in the students’ reflections in this study. Thus, it should be noted that, though learning *in situ* at Holocaust memorial sites is considered to be a more emotionally charged pedagogy than learning in the classroom and though the script enacted collective changes that include vulnerability for the individual, students in the present study did not articulate being overwhelmed by the suffering of the victims. To what extent strong emotions shortcut cognitive processes is outside the scope of this study; however, a tentative answer based on the students’ reflections is they did not, at least not in absolute terms. The students’ reflective writing of themselves in relation to historical characters is in that respect too nuanced and elaborated.

The absence of a Swedish perspective in the students’ reflection is noteworthy in the light of historical research on Sweden’s acts during the Second World War (Åmark, 2016). Without a national framing, a virtual neutral position is created, suited for learning the importance of all humans as equals. This may connect to the concept of Sweden as a leading nation of democracy and human rights promotion, a central part of the Swedish cultural construction of national identity.

Whether the absence of an articulated Swedish perspective in the written reflections is a feature of Swedish TLH or a consequence of the study’s limited material is not clear. Other limitations of the study result from the empirical data being produced without any research intervention. The background of the students is unknown, which means that it is not possible to conclude anything on the significance of their ethnicity, their motivations to apply to the local programme, or their prior knowledge and interest in history, in general, or the Holocaust, in particular. Additionally, the

significance of the teachers' impact on the educational processes remains similarly unclear. These limitations should be taken into account during future research on Swedish study trips. Such research should also consider the impact of the length of the trip on the social dimension and what pedagogical strategies are used to tackle this untraditional way of learning. The importance the students in this study attribute to the group as a provider of safety also has implications for further research on study trips to places other than Holocaust memorial sites. The social safety brings opportunities for the students to develop a discursive practice by sharing impressions and opinions during the trip. However, further research should pay attention to safety partly depending on pedagogical habits, such as writing and sharing reflections, and articulations of expectancies established before a study trip. Additionally, due to the unfamiliar learning space on study trips, the social safety may be a more crucial prerequisite for educational processes in comparison with education in classrooms.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was supported by Stiftelsen Natur och Kultur under grant number 802000-3813.

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