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Educational Autonomy and the Holocaust: A Comparative Study of Teachers' Freedom in European Narratives

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ABSTRACT

While Holocaust memory underscores the significance of freedom, the actual enactment of freedom varies across different countries, posing a vital question for educating about the Holocaust. How do educators navigate this dissonance? Do they serve as conduits for government perspectives, or do they exercise their teacher autonomy? As part of a comparative study examining shifts in Holocaust memory in Europe from 2020 to 2022, my colleagues and I conducted in-depth interviews with 75 Holocaust educators from Poland, Hungary, Germany, and England, inviting them to share their life stories and professional experiences. This article delves into a recurring theme found within these educators' narratives: the appreciation of freedom and choice.

To interpret the significance of this theme, I integrate educational theories on 'difficult history' and teacher autonomy with theories of psychological reactance and the freedom quotient (FQ). I draw on Isaiah Berlin's concepts of negative and positive liberty to bridge the personal and societal dimensions. The resulting model provides a framework for the study's findings. As expected, teachers from Poland and Hungary felt their negative liberty was constrained, while those from Germany and England reported a greater degree of autonomy. More surprisingly, limited negative liberty led many interviewees from Poland and Hungary to find powerful ways to express their inner freedom. These included resistance to authority, activism within and beyond the classroom, and the application of diverse and creative pedagogical approaches in EaH. The interviews also pointed to a connection between higher levels of negative liberty in Germany and England, and a plurality of content and goals in EaH within these countries. In light of these findings, I offer policy and educational recommendations.

KEYWORDS

Educating about the Holocaust (EaH); teacher autonomy; negative and positive liberty; freedom quotient (FQ); Holocaust education; teacher reactance

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> The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again […] the single genuine power standing against the principle of Auschwitz is autonomy.
>
> Theodor Adorno[1]

> Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.
>
> Viktor Frankl[2]

Introduction

How do freedom and Holocaust education relate to one another? In principle, as both epigraphs at the head of this paper suggest, since the Holocaust exemplified one of history's periods of extreme lack of freedom, Holocaust education should be entrusted with safeguarding its value. In practice, however, Holocaust education itself is often burdened with lack of educational freedom, as it is heavily subjugated to national agendas. The question at the center of this paper relates to Holocaust educators: How do they manage freedom or lack thereof, in their teaching? Do they rise to the occasion and heed Holocaust memory's call for freedom at a risk to themselves, or do they function as mouthpieces of their regime? As it turns out, the answer is neither simple nor dichotomous.

Educating about the Holocaust (EaH[3]) is a politicized activity, reflecting underlying national and political agendas and hegemonic narratives, as is the case for many 'difficult,'[4] and 'controversial'[5] educational topics. When this agenda clashes with that of teachers, it also impinges on their educational autonomy in various ways, some subtle and others less so.

Using the themes that emerge from 75 interviews with Holocaust educators from countries characterized by varying degrees and styles of state control, I contend that constraining the academic freedom of Holocaust educators frequently engenders forms of resistance, while affording educators the latitude to manifest a diversity of EaH objectives and pedagogical methods yields heightened levels of educational pluralism. This observation challenges calls for the establishment of unified national EaH objectives, periodically advocated by educational experts.[6]

Literature review and theoretical framework

In the following sections, I briefly review existing research pertaining to EaH, situating the present study within a relatively underexplored nexus of research themes. To conceptualize the issue under examination, I integrate the concepts

[1]Theodor W. Adorno, "Education After Auschwitz," in Theodor W. Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, (eds.), *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 19, 23.
[2]Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 87.
[3]Educating about the Holocaust (EaH) is also termed Holocaust Education (HE) or Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust (TLH). The acronym EaH indicates that the process of teaching about the Holocaust in schools is *educational* rather than merely informative as TLH might imply; and is *about* the Holocaust, which the acronym HE does not convey.
[4]Terrie Epstein and Carla L. Peck, *Teaching and Learning Difficult Histories in International Contexts: A Critical Sociocultural Approach* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), pp. 189–202.
[5]Katrin Kello, "Sensitive and Controversial Issues in the Classroom: Teaching History in a Divided Society," *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 22, no.1 (2016): pp. 35–53.
[6]Stuart Foster, "EaH in England: Concerns, Controversies, and Challenges," in T. Lawson and A. Pearce (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 370; Andy Pearce, "The Holocaust in the National Curriculum after 25 Years," *Holocaust Studies* 23, no. 3 (2017): pp. 231–62.

of difficult history, teacher autonomy, negative and positive liberty, and the freedom quotient into a conceptual model that will provide a theoretical framework for the study.

Educating about the Holocaust is prevalent worldwide,[7] and is mandated by law in thirteen countries and 23 US states (as of 2022[8]). Correspondingly, scholarship on EaH is burgeoning.[9] The field can roughly be divided into six primary foci and several smaller ones:[10] normative-analytic explorations (e.g. theoretical or prescriptive essays on how EaH should be conducted[11]); content and pedagogy analysis (e.g. studies analysing curricula, textbooks, and pedagogies[12]); studies of learning processes and outcomes (e.g. exploring the experiences and knowledge levels of students[13]); contextual case studies (e.g. examining EaH in specific national, religious, or memory-site contexts[14]); studies about teachers (e.g. exploring teacher training and learning, teacher satisfaction and attitudes[15]) and comparative studies (e.g. cross-cultural analyses of EaH). Among these foci, certain combinations are more common than others. For example, comparative studies have tended to explore EaH content and students' knowledge levels.[16] This reflects an underlying theme in the field: Context is critical, and EaH differs greatly by context; yet, at the same time, cross-cutting themes in EaH can and should be identified for the sake of furthering the field. However, few studies have compared the lived experiences of Holocaust educators across different national contexts. This article aims to address this research gap by comparing the narratives of EaH educators from four European countries regarding how they engage with the Holocaust as 'difficult history.'

The Holocaust epitomizes what scholars of pedagogy and collective memory call 'difficult histories,'[17] that is, 'historical narratives […] that incorporate contested, painful, and/or violent events into regional, national, or global accounts of the

[7]Peter Carrier, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Torben Messinger, "A Global Mapping of the Holocaust in Textbooks and Curricula," in Zehavit Gross and E. Doyle Stevick, (eds.), *As the Witnesses Fall Silent: 21st Century Holocaust Education in Curriculum, Policy and Practice* (Switzerland: Springer, Cham, 2015), pp. 245–61.

[8]Wikipedia article, "Laws requiring teaching of the Holocaust," Wikipedia (2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laws_requiring_teaching_of_the_Holocaust#References

[9]Monique Eckmann, Doyle Stevick, and Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, *Research in Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust: A Dialog Beyond Borders* (Berlin: Metropol, 2017).

[10]Some smaller research foci include global aspects of EaH (e.g. Felicitas Macgilchrist and Barbara Christophe, "Translating Globalization Theories into Educational Research: Thoughts on Recent Shifts in Holocaust Education," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 32, no. 1 (2011): pp. 145–58); historical and chronological analyses of EaH (e.g. Zehavit Gross, "A Typology for the Development of Holocaust Education Scholarship: Coping with a National Trauma," *Curriculum and Teaching* 26, no. 1 [2011]: pp. 73-86); EaH with minorities (e.g. Suzanne D. Rutland, "Genocide or Holocaust Education: Exploring Different Australian Approaches for Muslim Schoolchildren," in Gross and Stevick, (eds.), *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, pp. 225–41; and digital EaH (e.g. Stefania Manca, "Bridging Cultural Studies and Learning Science: An Investigation of Social Media Use for Holocaust Memory and Education in the Digital Age," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 43, no. 3 (2021): pp. 226–53).

[11]See, for example, Michael Gray, *Contemporary Debates in Holocaust Education* (London: Springer, 2014).

[12]See, for example, Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg, (eds.), *Essentials of Holocaust Education: Fundamental Issues and Approaches* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

[13]See, for example, Anna Stefaniak and Michał Bilewicz. "Contact with a Multicultural Past: A Prejudice-Reducing Intervention," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 50 (2016): pp. 60–5.

[14]See, for example, Foster, "EaH in England"; Eyal Kaminka, "Teaching About the Holocaust in Israel: A Pedagogical Approach Adopted by the Israeli Ministry of Education," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 3, no. 3 (2016): pp. 237–49.

[15]See, for example, Henry Maitles and Paula Cowan, *Understanding and Teaching Holocaust Education* (London: Sage Publications, 2016).

[16]See, for example, Eckmann et al., Research in Teaching and Learning About the Holocaust.

[17]Sara A. Levy and Maia Sheppard, "Difficult Knowledge and the Holocaust in History Education," in Scott Alan Metzger and Lauren McArthur Harris, (eds.), *The Wiley International Handbook of History Teaching and Learning* (New York: Wiley, 2018), pp. 365–80.

past.'[18] Teaching difficult history is challenging because it uses the present to judge the past[19] while bringing the past to bear on the present.[20] Terms such as 'controversial topics'[21] and 'sensitive issues'[22] can be used to expand the scope of our discussion to EaH in subjects other than history.[23] While controversies offer great potential for teaching open-mindedness and dialogue skills, they also risk offending or upsetting students, parents, and authorities, especially in today's polarized political climate.[24]

Critical theorists emphasize that all education within nation-states is susceptible to hegemonic forces that wield the authority to dictate 'official' narratives while suppressing alternative perspectives.[25] This becomes particularly pronounced in regimes that offer limited space for dissenting viewpoints. Furthermore, the more challenging and politically charged a subject, the greater the likelihood that policymakers will assert influence over its curriculum and pedagogical approach. Thus, in places where Holocaust memory is troubled and government control is pervasive, some educators may exhibit reluctance to address the Holocaust within their classrooms.[26] Exercise of control can manifest in subtle and indirect ways, too. For example, in places where antisemitic sentiments prevail as social norms, teachers may be hesitant to resist them.[27]

Offsetting the potential inclination to conform to external pressures, however, is the drive for 'educational autonomy.'

Educational autonomy refers to the degree of self-governance and independent decision-making that educational institutions, teachers, students, and parents possess.[28] It spans various domains, such as curricular choices and institutional policies, and reflects highly valued ideals in Western democracies, such as self-realization and freedom of choice.[29] Within this concept, teacher autonomy[30] is the capacity of teachers to make decisions in areas concretely related to their work and express

[18]Epstein and Peck, *Teaching and Learning Difficult Histories*.
[19]Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Historical Understanding: Beyond the Past and Into the Present," in Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg, (eds.), *Knowing, Teaching and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 390–418.
[20]Cinthia Salinas, *Teaching Difficult Histories in Difficult Times: Stories of Practice*, (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2022), p. 1.
[21]Diana E. Hess, *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009).
[22]Kello, "*Sensitive and Controversial Issues in the Classroom*."
[23]Additional terms include "sensitive pasts," "violent pasts," "difficult knowledge," and "traumatic pasts." For explanations, see Magdalena H. Gross and Luke Terra, "What Makes Difficult History Difficult?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 99, no. 8 (2018): pp. 51–6.
[24]Maren Tribukait, "Students' Prejudice as a Teaching Challenge: How European History Educators Deal with Controversial and Sensitive Issues in a Climate of Political Polarization," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 49, no. 4 (2021): pp. 540–69.
[25]Zvi Bekerman and Michalinos Zembylas, "Identity Negotiations in Conflict Ridden Societies: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives," *Paedagogica Historica* 52, nos. 1–2 (2016): p. 16.
[26]Christine Beresniova, "'Unless They Have To': Power, Politics, and Institutional Hierarchy in Lithuanian Holocaust Education," in Gross and Stevick, (eds.), *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, pp. 391–406; Carrier et al., "A Global Mapping of the Holocaust."
[27]Christine Beresniova, "Children Who Speak in Their Parents' Clichés: Exploring the Broader Social Relationship Between Cultural Practices and Teacher Identity in Lithuanian Holocaust Education," *European Education* 51, no. 2 (2019): pp. 111–26.
[28]Terri S. Wilson and Matthew A. Ryg. "Becoming Autonomous: Nonideal Theory and Educational Autonomy," *Educational Theory* 65, no. 2 (2015): pp. 127–50.
[29]Eamonn Callan, *Autonomy and Schooling* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 1988).
[30]Alan Cribb and Sharon Gewirtz, "Unpacking Autonomy and Control in Education: Some Conceptual and Normative Groundwork for a Comparative Analysis," *European Educational Research Journal* 6, no. 3 (2007): pp. 203–13; Gemma Parker, "Teachers' Autonomy," in *Research in Education* 93, no. 1 (2015): pp. 19–33.

their professional identity with integrity.[31] Research has established that teacher autonomy is linked to higher levels of teacher satisfaction, greater propensity for educational innovation, enhanced collaboration among teachers, and lower levels of teacher attrition.[32] Thus, it is considered an important educational asset.[33]

However, teacher autonomy is a challenged concept. First, it is questioned by the double mandate of public education; that is, education's obligation to serve both the individual child and the institutions of the state. Where collective needs prevail, autonomy recedes. Second, sociocultural educational theorists argue that all knowledge is co-created and culturally formed,[34] and therefore no teacher can be truly autonomous. Third, critical educational theorists argue that knowledge serves to unequally distribute power,[35] and therefore education systems *eo ipso* severely limit both teacher and student autonomies. Considering such challenges, teacher autonomy can be more modestly defined as the freedom to navigate multiple social and political formation of knowledge (e.g. hegemonic and counter-cultural ones) and make personal identity-congruent choices among them.

Previous findings on teachers' sense of autonomy when teaching difficult history have been mixed. Some studies find evidence of teachers' self-censorship when teaching such subjects.[36] Others find that teachers are not afraid to engage with politically charged topics, even in authoritarian settings. For example, in one cross-cultural study, teachers considered very few issues to be 'sensitive,' and rarely cited threats from superiors and peers as concern leading to hesitation to teach.[37] In another, teachers retrospectively framed their decisions to teach challenging topics as episodes of personal courage and competence.[38] Similarly, in Singapore, a country that imposes constraints on teaching certain political controversies, a study found that teachers did not shy away from teaching these topics simply because the government instructed them to avoid them.[39]

How do some teachers come to oppose authorities and teach counter-hegemonic narratives? Following is a possible two-phase answer:

Psychological reactance: Diminishing teachers' freedom can lead to so-called 'teacher reactance.' Psychological reactance is the tendency to counter the removal

[31]Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan, *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School* (New York, NY and Toronto: Teachers College Press, 2015).

[32]Some of the recent studies and systematic reviews include: Ashley Grant et al., "A Framework for Graduated Teacher Autonomy: Linking Teacher Proficiency with Autonomy," *The Educational Forum* 84, no. 2 (Routledge, 2020): pp. 100–13; OECD, *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders and Valued Professionals*, (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), chapter 5.

[33]OECD, *TALIS 2018 Results*.

[34]Jean Lave, "Situating Learning in Communities of Practice," in Lauren B. Resnick, John M. Levine, and Stephanie D. Teasley, (eds.), *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1991), pp. 2-63.

[35]Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse" in R. Young, (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (London: Routledge, 1981); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1970/1993).

[36]Jeff Byford, Sean Lennon, and William B. Russell, "Teaching Controversial Issues in the Social Studies: A Research Study of High School Teachers," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 82, no. 4 (2009): pp. 165–70; Thomas Misco, "'We Do Not Talk About These Things': The Promises and Challenges of Reflective Thinking and Controversial Issue Discussions in a Chinese High School," *Intercultural Education* 24, no. 5 (2013): pp. 401–16.

[37]Tsafrir Goldberg, Wolfgang Wagner, and Nebojša Petrović, "From Sensitive Historical Issues to History Teachers' Sensibility: A Look Across and Within Countries," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 27, no. 1, (2019): pp. 7–38, here p. 10.

[38]Nicola Brauch, Giovanna Leone, and Mauro Sarrica, "'The Debate Almost Came to a Fight … ' Results of a Cross-National Explorative Study Concerning History Teachers' Shared Beliefs About Teaching Historical Sensitive Issues," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 27, no.1 (2019): pp. 111–32.

[39]Li-Ching Ho, Theresa Alviar-Martin, and Enrique NP Leviste, "'There is Space, and There are Limits': The Challenge of Teaching Controversial Topics in an Illiberal Democracy," *Teachers College Record* 116, no. 4 (2014): pp. 1–28.

of freedom, and it has been demonstrated in multiple domains[40] including education.[41] Studies have shown that people are highly sensitive to having their freedom of choice restricted by others; a loss of a previously existing freedom motivates individuals to restore it.[42]

Expressing positive liberty: Psychological reactance can lead individuals to clarify their internal values and beliefs, and act upon them. According to the philosopher Isaiah Berlin,[43] negative liberty – or 'freedom from' – is the absence of external obstacles or constraints to doing what one wishes to do.[44] When authorities dictate what can be taught about a controversial subject, they curtail teachers' negative liberty. However, a second form of liberty, positive liberty – or 'freedom to' – connotes the potential to take control of one's life and realize its fundamental purposes. Notably, Berlin warns that positive freedom can be misused, and even lead to authoritarianism, if portrayed as reflecting a collective 'higher self,' and manipulated to argue that an individual is only free when aligned with a higher social or collective goal.[45] In the model I propose, 'positive liberty' refers to intrinsic and ego-syntonic aspects of freedom, but we will return to Berlin's cautionary note in the discussion.

Social psychologist Roy Baumeister suggests that 'Conscious, rational choice and self-control seem to be integral parts of what people perceive as free.'[46] Developing this further, philosopher Stephen Cave suggested that free will, or intrinsic freedom (which he conceptualized a 'freedom quotient' – FQ[47]) involves three capacities:

(1) **The ability to generate multiple options of action.** The more people can envision alternatives for their behaviors, the freer they are. This ability relies on the imaginative faculty, which might explain the connection between autonomy and creativity. It also involves envisaging change, which can transform internal freedom into activism. Finally, it can explain how a plurality of options come to be expressed in societies that promote personal choice.
(2) **Having the education, skills, and reasoning abilities to choose wisely between options**. In the context of education, this implies ample teacher training and resources, such as EaH professional development.
(3) **Having the willpower, courage, and determination – or other virtues necessary – to turn choices into action**. In the case of teachers, this could mean having the courage to oppose authorities.

[40]Benjamin D. Rosenberg and Jason T. Siegel, "A 50-year Review of Psychological Reactance Theory: Do Not Read This Article," *Motivation Science* 4, no. 4 (2018): p. 281.
[41]See, for example, Nicholas T. Tatum, Michele K. Olson, and T. K. Frey, "Noncompliance and Dissent with Cell Phone Policies: A Psychological Reactance Theoretical Perspective," *Communication Education* 67, no. 2 (2018): pp. 226–44.
[42]Jack W. Brehm, *A Theory of Psychological Reactance* (Michigan, MI: Academic Press, 1966); Sharon S. Brehm and Jack W. Brehm, *Psychological Reactance: A Theory of Freedom and Control* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 2013), pp. 2-4.
[43]Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118–72. The terms "liberty" and "freedom" are used interchangeably by Berlin: Ian Carter, "Positive and Negative Liberty," in Edward N. Zalta, (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022).
[44]Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty."
[45]Ibid, pp. 161–2.
[46]Roy F. Baumeister, "Free Will in Scientific Psychology," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3, no. 1 (2008): pp. 14–9, here p. 16.
[47]Stephen Cave, "The Free Will Scale" *Aeon*, 19 October 2015. https://aeon.co/essays/free-will-is-back-and-maybe-this-time-we-can-measure-it

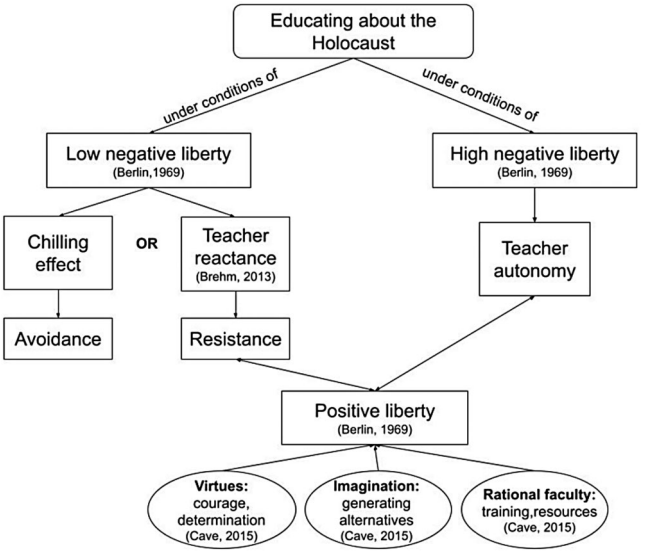

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of the Relationship Between Positive and Negative Liberty in Educating about the Holocaust.

The proposed conceptual model integrates these concepts, suggesting that while curtailing negative liberty of Holocaust educators may have a chilling effect on their teaching, it can also lead to reactance and mobilization of positive liberty through practices of resistance and educational creativity. In turn, high levels of negative liberty can enhance teacher autonomy and lead to positive liberty through knowledge building and pluralism, which is a testimony to the existence of multiple options (See Figure 1).

I next employ this proposed model to analyze the narratives of Holocaust educators who navigate issues of freedom in their teaching. In the subsequent section, I provide the context for the cross-cultural study 'Sites of Tension,'[48] a research collaboration in which my colleagues and I examined contemporary shifts in Holocaust memory in Europe.

The context of the study

We set out to explore how different World War II-related national legacies interact with today's unsettled sociopolitical climate, expressed in a rise in extreme right-wing political movements, economic challenges, and immigration-related unrest. To understand the relationship between past and present in shaping the way the Holocaust is being remembered, we explored five countries and three arenas: the public domain, social media, and the educational domain.

Due to space considerations, this paper focuses on Holocaust educators in Poland, Hungary, Germany, and England.[49] While a full review the state of EaH in each

[48]Nurit S. Novis-Deutsch et al., (eds.), *Sites of Tension: Shifts in Holocaust Memory in Relation to Antisemitism and Political Contestation in Europe* (Haifa: Weiss Livnat Center for Holocaust Research and Education, 2023).

[49]The reader interested in the fifth case study, that of Spanish educators, is invited to read further about it in the full study report, Ibid.

country is beyond the scope of this paper,[50] a brief synopsis of each context will help to establish that the concept of EaH differs greatly in the countries studied, and that any cross-cultural comparison of EaH must carefully consider the particular conditions of remembrance policies and the nation-state conditions of its realization.

In **Poland**, the public memory of the Holocaust since the end of World War II has been shaped by politics, nationalist tendencies, and societal taboos, rather than by objective historical understanding. The political transition of 1989 did broaden public discourse, but this memory remains influenced by concerns about Poland's self-image.[51] Holocaust education in Poland is strongly aligned with political discourse and cultural memory. It shifted away from Western EaH strategies in 2015, when the nationalist government replaced what they called a 'Pedagogy of Shame' with the notion of a 'Pedagogy of Pride,' promoting a vision of innocent Poland under occupation and after the war. Meanwhile, the 2018 anti-defamation law, which criminalized the ascription of 'Nazi crimes to the Polish Nation,' made the lack of freedom to interpret the past more apparent, as it is today subject to civil suits and financial penalties.

In **Hungary**, Holocaust memory has undergone different stages, and currently exists in two forms: global, echoing the cosmopolitan Holocaust memory narrative; and local, a victimhood narrative that minimizes the responsibility of the Hungarian nation in the events of the Holocaust in Hungary. EaH has a relatively new status in the Hungarian curriculum, as a tendency towards centralization has led to it becoming more governmentally controlled, and increased revisionist tendencies have shifted the narrative in a nationalist direction. Recent organizational changes in the Hungarian school system significantly increased central control on school staff and principals. The new core curriculum introduced in 2020 offers little scope for critical thinking and democratic values, focusing instead on building a stronger, ethnic, and exclusive Hungarian national identity. In terms of Holocaust education, this curriculum now portrays the country as the innocent victim of historical circumstances.[52]

In **Germany**, the educational system is a key site for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge about the Holocaust, and for socializing young members of society into the collective narrative and German identity, which is deeply intertwined with the era of National Socialism and with the idea of taking responsibility for Germany's crimes. After World War II, educational approaches evolved, initially neglecting the Holocaust before turning EaH to a central educational concern, with personalized, victim-oriented, and empathetic pedagogies. The teaching landscape has further diversified in the twenty-first century due to generational shifts and societal diversification, leading to debates on how to approach Holocaust education in a multicultural context. Despite some shortcomings and various public debates, EaH is well established, with students learning about the topic on multiple occasions and in a variety of spaces. Today, EaH in

[50]For full reviews of EaH in the four countries, see Novis Deutsch et al., *Sites of Tension*. Also see: for Poland – Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, *Islands of Memory: The Landscape of the (Non)Memory of the Holocaust in Polish Education from 1989 to 2015* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2020); for Hungary – Mónika Mezei, "Teaching About the Holocaust Using Video Testimonies–Pedagogical Aims and Research Results of the Impact and Efficacy of Lessons," *Tanulmányok* (2020): p. 4; for Germany – Wolfgang Meseth and Matthias Proske, "Mind the Gap: Holocaust Education in Germany, Between Pedagogical Intentions and Classroom Interactions," in Gross and Stevick, *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*; for England – Foster, "EaH in England."

[51]Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs and Adam Musiał, in Novis-Deutsch et al, *Sites of Tension*, pp. 253–39.

[52]Aniko Félix, in Novis Deutsch et. al., *Sites of Tension*, pp. 239–41.

Germany is influenced by multiple regulations that encompass teacher preparation, educational programs, curricula, memory sites, and textbooks.[53]

In **England**,[54] Holocaust education has been a compulsory part of the National Curriculum since 1991. Researchers have critiqued the fact that there is more than one coherent set of aims and purposes for Holocaust History education in England.[55] However, the landmark 2009 UCL teacher survey[56] found that 95 percent of respondents thought it would always be important to teach about the Holocaust, while the 2020 UCL survey[57] found that 63 percent of respondents attended EaH training, indicating a growing level of proficiency among them.[58] In early twenty-first-century England, the government partnered with NGOs to allocate substantial resources for Holocaust education and commemoration. Initiatives have expanded under government support, some of which exemplify the government's use of Holocaust memory for political goals, aiming to build social consensus and address universal human rights issues.

Despite significant contextual differences among these countries, they have all undergone substantial educational transformations, often linked to political transitions. Foundational topics and themes in EaH also recur across these nations, facilitating cross-cultural comparisons.

Materials and methods

The analysis is based on data collected through interviews and surveys of 75 Holocaust educators (17-20 per country), chosen by a set of selection criteria. The interviewers were trained local EaH researchers, and the interviews were conducted in the respondents' native languages. Respondents taught fifth- to twelfth-grade students about the Holocaust for more than two hours per school year per class, and had at least two years of teaching experience. Respondents were also chosen according to diversifying criteria, through use of surveys and targeted sampling. Some diversity markers were shared (e.g. gender, age diversity, and political and religious diversity) and others were designated per country. For example, in Poland we interviewed teachers from urban centers, rural conservative areas, the 'Recovered Territories,'[59] and the vicinity of Auschwitz. The goal of this 'maximal diversity matrix' was not to collect a representative sample, but rather to elicit a wide array of different narratives and worldviews. In the full sample, half of the interviewees fulfilled pre-defined criteria for 'best-practices educators' (e.g. they had developed teaching materials themselves), and the others were more typical teachers.

[53]Maximilian Hauer and Claudia Globisch, in Novis-Deutsch et al., *Sites of Tension*, pp. 242–2.
[54]This study did not focus on other UK constituent countries, i.e. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
[55]Foster, "EaH in England."
[56]Kay Andrews et al., *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools: An Empirical Study of National Trends, Perspectives and Practice* (London: Holocaust Education Development Programme, Institute of Education, University of London, 2009).
[57]UCL Centre for EaH's Continuity and Change Research Study – Second Data Release (September 2021): https://holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Continuity-and-Change-Data-Release-2-Knowledge-and-CPDv3.pdf
[58]Tracy Adams, in Novis-Deutsch et al., *Sites of Tension*, pp. 151–4; Abby Zucker, ibid, pp. 246–50.
[59]The "Recovered Territories" denote regions that were historically Polish before their annexation by Germany, later reallocated to Poland following World War II. This area encompasses the former eastern territories of Germany and the Free City of Danzig (Gdańsk). In the aftermath of the war, most of their German inhabitants were subjected to forced deportation.

Of the 75 respondents, 49.27 percent of the teachers were male, and 50.73 percent were female. The average age was 44.8 (SD = 10.2), with a range of 24-61. Teachers taught about the Holocaust in fourteen different school subjects (e.g. History, Literature, Social Sciences, Art).

In the semi-structured 1-2.5-hour interviews, we invited teachers to share their life story, discuss any personal connections to the Holocaust, and then tell us why, when, what, and how they teach about the Holocaust. Links to a full description of the research methodology can be found in the footnote.[60]

The interviews were translated, transcribed, and analyzed by six trained coders – first holistically per interview, and then categorically. We used a Grounded Theory,[61] bottom-up, line-by-line coding for the first twenty interviews, then employed a top-down coding scheme for the rest of the interviews. We used the Dedoose© digital mixed methods platform and generated 157 codes[62] that were applied to all interview excerpts. Coding was quality-checked by an additional coder, and conflicts were resolved through discussion using the Consensual Qualitative Research method (CQR).[63] We then crossed the coded excerpts with demographic data about each teacher to form the basis for our findings.

Findings

Perceptions of negative liberty among Holocaust educators

The first finding was to be expected, but still needed to be established empirically: Overall, Polish and Hungarian teachers tended to report low levels of autonomy to teach what they wanted about the Holocaust, whereas German and English teachers reported higher levels. Here are several examples:[64]

Jagoda (Poland) describes her school climate after the 2018 so-called Polish 'Holocaust Law' was passed. Her principal, afraid of drawing fire from the authorities, decided to discontinue any Holocaust-related events, a move with which Jagoda's colleagues were all too pleased. Jagoda describes what followed:

> Explicit comments were made a few times in my school of the kind, 'enough of those Jews, those workshops on Jews, it's time for something else.' [And once] we didn't let a Jew[65] into our school because he was a Jew. My colleagues said our students had various views – thus went their argument – and they might not be happy with such a visit. And it was a highly charged period. And I was told something to the effect that

[60]For method details, see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6mpcnjE7ZaUPSjXQTvMt7KLnPrB3cl/edit#heading=h.gjdgxs For interview protocol, see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KEr9KvbLJJ5vMpOrLQ0-TU4edZ3pq-iOQOhRHeF1WIU/edit For survey questions, see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_WMUtDCRAsz-HptIsH3sBW7Kk8MzlneynQ_a5S_DY04/edit See also: Novis-Deutsch et al., *Sites of Tension.*

[61]Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, (London: Sage, 2006).

[62]For full coding list see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m1cQoHTurmz9hNSeVg5c5nksetVbKmn6qqbFyFuNzmg/edit#heading=h.firb71fhwibn

[63]Clara Hill E., et al., "Consensual Qualitative Research: An Update," *Journal of Counselling Psychology* 52, no. 2 (2005): p. 196.

[64]All names and identifying details were changed. Words in square parentheses are explanations or abridgements made by the researchers.

[65]Jagoda here is referring to a Holocaust survivor for whom she requested permission to invite to speak to her school, but her request was turned down.

> we can't be so biased. I wondered if we should invite a former Nazi to the school to tell us his perspective.

Klára (Hungary) shares a story of trying to invite a representative from Amnesty to teach a class to her students on hate crimes, as part of her course on the Holocaust:

> I told the principal that I would very much like to request [Amnesty's] 'Hate Crimes' lesson and that they were willing to give it. He said that he was okay with it, but that he had to let KLIKK [the Hungarian Center for Education] know. And then, get this: The Deputy Director of KLIKK wrote to the head of KLIKK of [a larger city], who […] made a call to Budapest, who put us on a blacklist immediately. So […] they blocked it completely. This cannot happen. That is the situation today in Hungary.

In comparison, consider Melina's experience (Germany):

> I have a lot of space there [in my EaH teaching], indeed a lot of freedom, I must say. Like on the issue of migration, I can engage very well. I can also teach historical themes in that section, for example on human rights, you can connect that very well. On discrimination. On slavery for example […] You can bring those up very well there.

In the above examples, Jagoda is impeded by her school principal, her colleagues, and her regime. Klára was subverted by the Hungarian Center of Education, although cautiously supported by her principal. Melina, on the other hand, is encouraged by her educational systems to make choices. The English teachers so deeply valued their educational autonomy, that some were uncomfortable with the compulsory status of EaH. While EaH was to them of utmost importance, they nevertheless felt that any curricular enforcement curtails teacher autonomy.

Autonomy can also be affected by colleagues, parents, and students. Here, the experiences of Polish teachers tended to differ from those of the others. For example, Karolina (Poland) shared:

> Last year […] I was organizing a trip to Warsaw, and that trip mostly focused on the Polin [Holocaust] Museum. […] When I invited the students' parents to a meeting and proposed this activity in Warsaw, one of the parents stood up and asked, 'Excuse me, why the Polin Museum, and not [a national Polish museum]?' So, I explained why and presented my arguments, but the student's father stated [she shifts to a brusque tone]: 'My child will not take part in such a trip,' and left the room ostentatiously, slamming the door. Such things happen more and more often. Or parents come – I had such a situation – some parents came to tell me they wished I wouldn't talk about Jews in class.

Although in each country a few teachers noted parental displeasure, their sense of autonomy was not as threatened as among the Polish interviewees. As István (Hungary) says: 'One or two parents said they had good ideas about what to teach […] I now handle this well enough, of course: I decide what I teach. Apologies.'

Negative liberty levels also related as expected to teacher satisfaction. Compare, for example, the emotional tones of Dean and Ellen from England to those of Janina and Barbara from Poland:

- Dean: 'I value my ability to shape the national narrative.'
- Ellen: '[In England, compared to other countries] you can be a lot more honest, perhaps, and more straightforward about what you're teaching.'
- Janina: 'I mostly fear politicians interfering with education.'

Table 1. Teachers' EaH Goals, Freedom-Related Goals or Lessons and Corresponding FQ Elements.

Goal Category	Freedom and Choice-Related Goals/Lessons	FQ Element Reflected in Freedom-Related Goals
Commemoration Goals	Take responsibility because the Holocaust happened here	• Cultivating Virtues: Agency
Citizenship Goals	Do not be a bystander Oppose injustice; resist	• Generating Options • Cultivating Virtues: Courage
Humanistic Goals	Become autonomous Make courageous and unpopular choices if needed	• Generating Options • Cultivating Virtues: Courage
Academic goals	Develop critical and independent thinking Use data to understand historical context	• Be Rational: Knowledge-Building

– Barbara: 'An atmosphere of fear has appeared, of apprehension.'

In sum, teachers in Poland reported the least amount of negative liberty and the highest level of apprehension, followed by Hungarian teachers; while the German and English teachers that we interviewed experienced a far higher degree of negative liberty.

Positive liberty or internal freedom among the educators

The central research question pertained to how teachers managed their experiences of freedom or lack thereof. Drawing on Cave's formulation of internal freedom as consisting of the ability to generate alternatives, the rational faculty to choose between them wisely, and the virtues necessary to turn choices into action, this was assessed by exploring teachers' EaH goals, by analyzing their actions in relation to freedom, by looking at their level of pedagogical creativity, and by comparing their levels of political activism.

EaH goals and freedom: Positive freedom requires a set of goals and beliefs that a teacher can clearly articulate. EaH goals and lessons were an important part of how teachers structured their EaH practices. [66] Based on a detailed coding of the interviews, 92 percent of the teachers spoke of clear and distinct goals they have for EaH, and of lessons they hoped that their students would draw from it. That is, most teachers had the internal freedom of knowing where they were going. Among these goals, themes of freedom and choice were prominent: Of the eighteen goals mentioned by respondents, six goals related to the importance of choice and freedom, see Table 1.

Actions reflecting freedom: Freedom is also expressed (or avoided) in actions that embody it.[67] Using a Grounded Theory approach, five categories of choice and freedom in action emerged: Teach Freedom, Grant Freedom, Forego Freedom, Reclaim Freedom, and Conform. Table 2 lists these categories, countries where they appeared, and examples of each.

[66]While Michael Marrus' injunction that "the principal lesson of the Holocaust, is, therefore, beware of lessons" (p. 160) makes sense on several counts, in this empirical study, many of the teachers deemed goals and lesson-drawing to be quite important. Michael R. Marrus, *Lessons of the Holocaust* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

[67]Importantly, "freedom" was an emergent theme: Interviewers did not raise it and did not direct teachers towards it through questions. All expressions of it arose of the teachers' own volition.

Table 2. Five Types of Freedom-Related Actions Among Holocaust Educators.

Category	Definition and Countries	Examples
Teach Freedom	Teacher makes freedom to choose a central theme, goal, or lesson in EaH * Appeared in all 4 countries, most prevalent (46 percent of all appearances of this coding category) in Germany	**Peter (England):** 'When you encounter stories of people who made very active choices to resist […] the more of those stories you encounter, the more you are able to deconstruct the idea that everybody had no choice, and no agency in participating in the Holocaust, and that, I think, is really valuable for young people because it tells them that their choices matter.' **Milena (Poland):** 'I would like to be remembered as a teacher who told them not to follow any radicalism, that you must be very careful, that if the crowd goes one way, you go the other way. Never follow the crowd.'
Grant Freedom	Teacher offers students choice and autonomy in EaH * Appeared infrequently, in equal small measures in the 4 countries	**Richard (England): '**[My Holocaust education pedagogy is] almost like discovery, questioning, inquisitiveness, developing thinking skills. And based on people.'
Forego Freedom	Teacher describes having to self-censor due to circumstances * Most prevalent (66 percent of coding cases) in Hungary. Often involves teachers reporting having observed this among colleagues	**Pál (Hungary):** 'I don't even bring it up anymore. I practice self-censorship because if I know that Haver [an EaH NGO] is a no, and UCUU [an NGO combatting discrimination against the Roma] is a no, then Amnesty International is an absolute no.' **Kálmán (Hungary):** 'My experience is that the majority have the opposite view, and if someone goes against the tide, he will be left without a job and, although they say that there is a shortage of teachers, I would not be able to find a job so easily.'
Reclaim Freedom	Teacher experiences reactance to loss of freedom and engages in acts of educational resistance * (Appeared exclusively in Poland and Hungary, both in equal measures)	**Josef (Hungary):** 'I think the most important message […] is that you always have to stand up [to injustice - NND]. I take the high-school students to these anti-prejudice demonstrations all the time.' **Pál (Hungary)**: 'I will not change. It is therefore certain that I will not teach anything but what I think is a fact. Therefore, the NAT [New Curriculum] will not influence me, nor will the ways in which certain politicians express themselves. I have seen many films and many documentaries. I have been to Auschwitz […] I have been to both camps – there is nothing to argue about.' **Milena (Poland)**: 'I once had a situation, quite unpleasant, when a parent phoned my principal to inform him that his child's teacher said that Ms. Milena said Poles murdered Jews during the war. […] But when I use facts, I think nobody will […] – though I don't know. With the current government, you can't be sure. They are really capable of doing a lot of evil.'
Conform	Teachers internalized norms about EAH and report conformity and unanimity among teachers * (Appeared infrequently in England and Germany)	**Michael (England)**: 'Normally when, in a department, you say 'Right, let's do this, let's teach this particular topic' – we're lucky we have a lot of freedom in the independent sector – normally you have dissenters, and they'll say 'no, no, no, I want to do this or that, or whatever,' but on this [EaH] – everybody does it, and everybody uses the resources, and that's pretty rare for our place.'

The first action category stemmed from the goals described above: Teachers in all four countries teach about the importance of freedom and choice. The second category entailed embodying choice as a pedagogical method: Teachers described how they offered students a choice of issues to explore, projects to create, and topics to speak about. This category was not very common, and was equally distributed between countries. The third category reflected the 'chilling effect' of governmental policy, and included teachers self-censoring to avoid trouble. This was rarely self-reported in our sample, but several Hungarian and Polish respondents reported that it was quite prevalent among their colleagues.

The fourth category appeared exclusively among Polish and Hungarian teachers, and it included testimonies of educational resistance. Some teachers described how they quietly or vociferously opposed the guidelines of directors or textbooks on how to teach about the Holocaust. Even accounting for the fact that any teacher agreeing to be interviewed for a study on Holocaust education was likely to support the topic, the level of opposition to authority-led EaH narratives and restrictions was high, among both Hungarian and Polish teachers. In addition to the examples in Table 2, consider the case of the controversy surrounding Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking's book on the complicity of Polish people in Holocaust-related crimes, *Night Without End*.[68] In March 2021, then Polish Minister of Education and Science Przemysław Czarnek disparaged the work as an 'anti-Polish, Nazi rag.'[69] In our interviews, several Polish teachers reported reading the book, and finding it convincing and important. Consequently, Marcin, a Polish teacher, describes how he shares insights from *Night Without End* with his students; Cyprian, another teacher from Poland, says of one of Engelking's books, 'I think it should be assigned reading. This is what I personally believe'; and Maciej, a third teacher, says, 'So what if some MP attacks Jan Grabowski?' Recall that 'some MP' is Maciej's Minister of Education!

The fifth category denotes an outcome of positive freedom, which Berlin cautioned against: groupthink. Teachers from England and Germany at times noted the complete agreement among them on EaH. In interviews with the German teachers in particular, we found very little tension between teachers and state institutions, and a high level of correspondence between the teachers' educational perspective and the hegemonic understanding of the Holocaust. These teachers perceived the national attitude to be enlightened and fully identified with it.

Creative pedagogies: Applying a variety of creative pedagogies to EaH can be considered another expression of freedom. In our study, respondents mentioned nineteen different types of pedagogies they use. Some were standard (e.g. lecturing, reading sources, hearing witnesses, watching films); others quite creative (e.g. presenting multiple actor perspectives, creating through art, dance, drama, music and photography, Problem Based Learning (PBL), and whole-class collaborative projects). We analyzed the number of times teachers reported using creative pedagogies (counting one reference per teacher per pedagogy). Table 3 summarizes the accumulated references to using creative pedagogies by countries. As we can see, Polish and German teachers were especially high in this

[68]Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, (eds.) *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nd Zagładą Żydów, 2018).

[69]"Antypolski szmatlawiec" in Polish. Aleksandra Gliszczyńska, "Intimidation Through Litigation: Freedom of Speech in Poland Today," VerfBlog, March 29, 2021: https://verfassungsblog.de/intimidation-through-litigation/; Adam Leszczyński: Czarnek: "Dalej jest noc" to "antypolski szmatławiec". My finansujemy badania polskiego bohaterstwa (March 24, 2021): https://oko.press/czarnek-dalej-jest-noc-to-antypolski-szmatlawiec-my-finansujemy-badania-polskiego-bohaterstwa/

Table 3. Number of References to Using Creative EaH Pedagogies, by Country.

Country	Accumulative # of references
England	18
Hungary	27
Germany	46
Poland	49

respect. This might indicate that positive liberty can be reached in both routes described in Figure 1 and presented in the Theoretical Framework section above.

Activism levels: The self-reported activism level of the teachers (e.g. teacher is politically active, goes to demonstrations, is a social activist, etc.) can be another indication of a sense of positive freedom. The coding of activism indicated three times more activists among the Eastern European teachers (n = 27) than among the Western European ones (n = 9). This could indicate that among teachers in countries with lower levels of negative liberty, the drive to actively work toward societal change was stronger. Interestingly, teachers with EaH training were nearly seven times as likely to resist as those without training. They also described themselves as activists more often than those not trained. On the other hand, no difference by level of expertise (typical/best practices) was found in the way teachers responded to issues of autonomy and freedom in EaH. This may indicate that one needn't be an 'extraordinary' teacher to resist; rather, emphasizing freedom may be 'built in' to training-based educating about the Holocaust.

Discussion

This study considered the challenges of freedom in educating about the Holocaust, a domain of 'difficult history.' Such domains are notorious for governmental control at the expense of teacher autonomy. I began by asking whether Holocaust educators safeguard autonomy or serve as the mouthpiece of their regime, and by querying the effects of promoting autonomy among Holocaust educators or limiting it.

The conceptual model I proposed is broader than a single study can support. However, the data presented indicates that under conditions of low negative liberty teachers were often dissatisfied and apprehensive. Respondents reported that for some of their colleagues, governmental control led to self-censorship or avoidance of EaH altogether. For others, including many of those interviewed in this study, this led to expressions of positive liberty: resistance, activism, and creative pedagogy. Conversely, under conditions of high negative liberty in Germany and England, teachers expressed satisfaction and valued their autonomy. Positive liberty in these cases led to creativity as well as to pluralism,[70] expressed in a diversity of EaH methods, goals, and messages.

This matches previous findings on how freedom is expressed. In one study, Baumeister[71] found that participants rated people's actions as most free when their actions went against external pressure, rather than going along with it. In this sense, far from supporting government-initiated Holocaust distortion, educators in Poland and Hungary are

[70]Nurit S. Novis-Deutsch, "The One and the Many: Both/And Reasoning and the Embracement of Pluralism," *Theory & Psychology* 28, no. 4 (2018): pp. 429–50.
[71]Baumeister, "Free Will in Scientific Psychology."

making a strong case for the power of internal freedom. At one stage of his interview, a Hungarian teacher mused: 'Well, they say that democracy can only be taught by a democrat. I think that only an accepting teacher can teach about acceptance. And tolerance can only be taught by a tolerant person.' In similar vein, perhaps it takes a teacher with a strong sense of internal freedom to model freedom.

As in some previous studies,[72] we, too, found that teachers do not rush to avoid controversial topics even if superiors and peers oppose their approach, and that this integrity is a source of pride for them. However, while the teachers in our study rarely felt, as in other studies, that they must protect themselves by avoiding difficult topics,[73] they did report that some of their colleagues acted in that way. These findings lend credence to the conceptual model proposed in Figure 1, although further studies are needed to corroborate its hypotheses.

An interesting expression of internal freedom was the use of creative pedagogies. In a systematic review,[74] creative pedagogy was related to a sense of autonomy not only among teachers, but also among students. Creative pedagogy in EaH can be especially important in restrictive educational environments. For example, studies in Poland have found that a positive impact of EaH on student attitudes did not depend on the amount of teaching, but rather on the engagement of highly trained educators who taught creatively about the Holocaust.[75]

Alternative explanations for the findings should be considered. One explanation relates the difference between 'resistors' and 'avoiders' – not to situational aspects (such as country), but rather to individual traits.[76] It is certainly likely that some teachers are more sensitive than others to the dangers of teaching difficult topics. However, this would not explain why all the events coded 'resistance' were solely from Poland and Hungary.

Another alternative explanation is to consider 'resistance' in terms of critical pedagogy, rather than in liberal terms, as Berlin did. Zembylas calls for performing resistance – individual or collective acts of opposition – through critical pedagogy.[77] He describes 'mundane acts of resistance' as those that occur 'when teachers design a classroom activity that challenges a normative expectation by the system.'[78] In a way, the teachers in our study are heeding his call, but their goals, language, and reasoning are rarely those of critical pedagogy. For example, only a handful of teachers related the Holocaust to colonialism, and these were almost entirely German and English teachers.[79]

[72]Goldberg et al., "From Sensitive Historical Issues"; Brauch et al., "The Debate Almost Came to a Fight"; Ho et al., "There is Space, and There are Limits," pp. 1–28.
[73]Thomas Misco, "'We Do Not Talk About These Things': The Promises and Challenges of Reflective Thinking and Controversial Issue Discussions in a Chinese High School," *Intercultural Education* 24, (2013).; Byford et al., "Teaching Controversial Issues in the Social Studies."
[74]Teresa Cremin and Kerry Chappell, "Creative Pedagogies: A Systematic Review," *Research Papers in Education* 36, no. 3 (2021): pp. 299–331.
[75]Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, *Islands of Memory*.
[76]Goldberg et al., "Sensitive Historical Issues"; Alison Kitson and Alan McCully. "'You Hear About It for Real in School.' Avoiding, Containing, and Risk-Taking in the History Classroom," *Teaching History* 120 (2005): p. 32.
[77]Michalinos Zembylas, "The Affective Dimension of Everyday Resistance: Implications for Critical Pedagogy in Engaging with Neoliberalism's Educational Impact," *Critical Studies in Education* 62, no. 2 (2021): pp. 211–26.
[78]Zembylas, "The Affective Dimension of Everyday Resistance," p. 212.
[79]Only eight teachers noted that they teach the history of colonialism in conjunction with EaH, and six of these were German or English.

Finally, a cautionary interpretation of the findings begins by questioning Adorno's point of departure that EaH is best served by teaching freedom and autonomy. Possibly, these individualist neo-liberal values may not be the true remedy for authoritarianism. Rather, perhaps entirely different ideals, such as empathy and solidarity, should be the foci of EaH. According to this interpretation, the fact that German and English teachers are so supportive of freedom (see the categories 'teach freedom' and 'conform' in Table 2) may reflect their own acting as 'mouthpieces' for their neo-liberal regimes.[80] Berlin's warning about the dangers of positive freedom when reflecting collective conformity should be considered here. Thus, we come full circle: Hegemonies affect education in all forms of governance, albeit in different ways and degrees, and freedom may be a scarcer commodity than presumed.

If this is so, the key ingredient in EaH may be not so much freedom *per se* as the pluralism of content and pedagogy that it engenders. In this study, extensive diversity was found among the English and German educators as regards goals, methods, and content of EaH. This resembles earlier findings about EaH diversity in these countries,[81] raising the question of how to interpret it. Previous studies have deemed this state of affairs wanting (labeling it 'ambiguity over aims and confusion over rationale'[82]), but I would like to suggest that a robust state of educational pluralism may in fact account for the high levels of commitment and engagement among teachers that we found in these countries, and should therefore be considered an asset rather than a liability.

This study has several limitations, which suggest potential avenues for future research. Firstly, our methodology relied solely on teacher interviews and, therefore, cannot determine the actual effects of teachers' attitudes towards freedom and autonomy on their students. Subsequent studies could enhance their design by incorporating classroom observations and interviews with students, thus broadening the findings and substantiating the proposed model. Secondly, the model presented here would benefit from quantitative measures to bolster its validity. Future research could employ large-scale surveys to assess the strength of the model's connections more accurately. Thirdly, forthcoming studies might delve deeper into the influence of national historical-political narratives on specific educational decision-making processes among Holocaust educators. Lastly, the intriguing observation regarding the increasing diversity in content and goals among Holocaust educators in Germany and England warrants further investigation. Researchers could explore the causes and consequences of such diversity, and examine the educational opportunities and constraints it presents.

Educational implications of this study include the following:

1) In an ideal world, value education would not be appended to the least moral period in human history. However, many students today receive scant humanistic value and moral education, and EaH is often used to fill that void. If value education does take place as part of EaH, then actions must reflect words. When a teacher speaks of the importance of choice and freedom, they must also be allowed to enact them.

[80] I thank Ella Imgart for this perceptive critique.
[81] Foster, "EaH in England."
[82] Pearce, "The Holocaust in the National Curriculum," p. 233.

Educational autonomy and choice should be the prerogative of all Holocaust educators, along with the training and resources needed to use this freedom wisely. This applies not only to content, but also to form: Encouraging students to make choices in their EaH learning could help them appreciate that choice and autonomy are truly valued.

2) Positive liberty rests on self-understanding. EaH teacher training should focus on self-exploration and personal motivation to learn about the Holocaust, before moving on to knowledge acquisition. It should also cover such topics as choice under restrictive conditions, and should do so not only theoretically, but also in the context of teachers' lives.
3) Educational autonomy can be messy. This means teachers will pursue different goals, use different methods, and even teach conflicting information. Rather than bemoan this state of affairs, such 'messiness' can be valued as evidence of an educational climate that promotes freedom, while bearing in mind the price of the alternative unified and state-controlled EaH curriculum. Familiarity with Isaiah Berlin's philosophy of 'value pluralism'[83] can help clarify the value of such an approach.

The teachers explored in this study may be an unusual group of committed Holocaust educators. However, 'a little light dispels much darkness'[84] and the way in which these teachers react to their lack of 'freedom from' educational control by mobilizing their 'freedom to' express their EaH convictions, can serve as an inspiration to many.

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[83]Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 2012).
[84]Bachya ibn Pekuda, *Duties of the Heart: Fifth Treatise on Devotion*, Chapter 5 (e-text: Sefaria Community Translation, 2022/c. 1040).

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