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German teachers' pilgrimage to an Israeli Holocaust Memorial: Emotions, encounters, and contested visions

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Abstract

Drawing on anthropological conceptions of pilgrimage, our ethnography of professional development at an Israeli Holocaust Memorial follows German teachers on journeys to Israel. Seeking transformative and transferable experiences to combat anti-Semitism in schools, teachers experienced the voyage as a secular pilgrimage rooted in Christian traditions of guilt, confession, and absolution. As teachers' emotional encounters in Israel simultaneously forged *communitas* and challenged official historical–pedagogical visions, their practices abroad elucidate prevalent Holocaust education discourses in contemporary Germany.

KEYWORDS

emotions, Holocaust education, memorial sites, pilgrimage, teacher professional development

INTRODUCTION

Scents of cinnamon, cloves, and hearty fried foods wafted in the crisp December evening air, as fairy lights twinkled against the clear, dark sky and festive chiming of Christmas carols reverberated across the market square of a large southwest German city. Amid the boisterous crowds wandering among colorful stalls in the Christmas market, a small group of teachers sat huddled together beneath a tent, feasting on sausages, sipping mulled

wine, laughing, and nostalgically recalling their shared journey to Jerusalem 2 months prior. Warming her hands on a glass of *glühwein*, Saskia,[1] a high school teacher in her early 30s, reminisced: "It was awesome. It was overwhelming. It was great. It was exhausting. It was everything" (field notes, December 12, 2019). After nodding in agreement and remarking on the city's historical, political, and religious complexity, Tanja, a teacher in her mid-40s, recounted questions asked by her intrigued colleagues upon her return to Germany: "How is the mood? … How is the food? Is it safe and how was it there? … This concept to say we send a few people there and they are multipliers for this whole topic. Well, it worked for me" (field notes, December 12, 2019).

For centuries Jerusalem has captured the imagination of pilgrims, who, like Saskia and Tanja, bring with them images, narratives, and dreams that are expressed, imbued with meaning, and realized at the city's sacred spaces through ritual performances later recounted to nonpilgrims back home (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2015). However, unlike those believers who have flocked to the holy city of the world's three monotheistic religions with sights set on the Via Dolorosa, the Western Wall, or the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the teachers gathered in the Christmas market represent secular pilgrims, returning from Jerusalem having undergone a transformation at an unsuspecting hallowed site: Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Straddling dual worlds of museum and memorial (Marcus, 2008), Yad Vashem is Israel's national remembrance authority, tasked with Holocaust commemoration, documentation, research, and education from a Jewish-historical perspective. Despite the existence of leading in situ Holocaust sites closer to home (e.g., Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen), in the past two decades, all 16 German federal states have signed cooperation contracts with Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies (ISHS) to provide professional development workshops. Each year, hundreds of German teachers, like those sharing passionate recollections and toasting their reunion in the Christmas market, return from 5- to 10-day seminars on Holocaust education in Jerusalem. How might anthropological conceptions of pilgrimage help explain German teachers' motivations and behaviors on journeys to Yad Vashem? How can their practices and encounters in Israel shed light on Holocaust education in today's German classrooms? And what are the roles of emotions, distance, place, and pilgrimage in contemporary Holocaust education and teacher professional development?

Professing an urgent need for high-quality research and cross-cultural exchanges on the "efforts of organizations dedicated to Holocaust education," such as Yad Vashem, Stevick and Gross (2015, pp. 4–5) declare that "the gulf between what is occurring in the field and what is researched remains exceptionally large." Our ethnographic study[2] seeks to narrow this gulf. Drawing on participant observation of four different German teacher groups before, during, and after their Israel journey, as well as interviews with teacher–participants and other key actors, we find that Christian-socialized German teachers are motivated by the desire for an intense, transformative, and transferable emotional experience mediated through contact with Jews and Jewish space. In contrast with European memorials, Yad Vashem—a space symbolically free of perpetrator influence—is envisaged as the ideal location for penance rooted in narratives of redemptive anti-antisemitism and Christian traditions of guilt, confession, and absolution. Throughout the voyage, as German teachers engage in spontaneous purgative rituals in Yad Vashem and tangential spaces surrounding the site, a much sought-after cathartic relief inspires teachers to touch students emotionally upon their return to Germany in an effort to counter anti-Semitism, racism, and right-wing extremism. However, as these symbolic interactions forge *communitas* among the teachers, they simultaneously generate fields of contestation for the Yad Vashem staff, who emphasize a Jewish-Israeli historical approach in their professional development program.

CONTEMPORARY ANTI-SEMITISM IN GERMANY AND TRENDS IN SHOAH EDUCATION

Three-quarters of a century after National Socialism, memories of the Shoah are no longer constructed based on the lived experiences of witnesses. Given loosening generational ties and the transformation of Germany into an immigrant country, such memories are becoming increasingly deterritorialized as traditional boundaries between perpetrators and victims are obscured (Levy & Sznaider, 2006). Facing the emergence of New Right movements, contemporary German generations wish to distance themselves from the perpetrator generation. Generations post-National Socialism have employed strategies such as retelling family narratives of self-victimization, blaming Jewish victims, pseudo-identifying with victims, and separating older relatives from crimes by portraying them as either uninvolved in the Shoah or resistant to National Socialism (Papendick et al., 2022; Rosenthal, 2010). Meanwhile, a perpetrator-victim reversal is a growing phenomenon across Europe in light of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians are sometimes compared with those of Nazi Germany (Wetzel, 2013).

The complexity of the current German political and cultural landscape has raised new questions regarding teaching National Socialism in classrooms. Today's cohort of Holocaust educators must strive to make the topic relevant for youth who no longer have personal connections with the perpetrator society or share the same moral expectations as previous generations (see Proske, 2012). Another predominant discourse focuses on what Holocaust education should look like in a migration society, given that traditional approaches to teaching the Shoah often exclude those with migrant backgrounds who, despite possibly holding German citizenship, are not descendants of National Socialist perpetrators (Can et al., 2013). Further debates spotlight whether to emphasize the Shoah's uniqueness or its universality (Gross, 2018), as well as if, and how, the Holocaust can be used to teach human rights and to combat contemporary anti-Semitism (e.g., Mihr, 2015).

Refusing Holocaust remembrance, advancing conspiracy theories, claiming Jews have too much power, and promoting Israel-related anti-Semitism are the dominant expressions of anti-Semitism in contemporary German society (Berek, 2018). Anti-Semitism is increasingly visible within the youth culture, music, clothing, and Internet activity of the far-right (e.g., Miller-Idriss, 2018), whose nonmigrant German supporters are the primary perpetrators of anti-Semitic incidents (Berek, 2018) despite prevalent discourses framing anti-Semitism as an exclusively “Muslim” or “refugee” problem. Such externalization of specific groups expresses the desire to declare German majority society anti-Semitism as finally overcome (Chernivsky, 2017). Given National Socialism's latent influence and Germany's burgeoning New Right movements, teachers frequently encounter anti-Semitism in schools and identify overcoming homegrown prejudices as major obstacles in Holocaust education (Gross, 2013). Pupils and faculty in all types of German schools have reported anti-Semitism, ranging from remarks in chats and WhatsApp groups to slurs and drawings, Holocaust jokes, and even physical violence against Jewish students. Teachers are often overwhelmed and ill-prepared to respond effectively to anti-Semitic incidents (Chernivsky & Lorenz-Sinai, 2023).

These new dynamics of anti-Semitism and tensions around the topic of the Holocaust within a changing social climate pose novel challenges for teacher training. Prospective history teachers are commonly hesitant to teach the Shoah, as they fail to obtain basic knowledge on the topic in university courses and can avoid the subject completely in some universities (Nägel & Kahle, 2018). Owing to Germany's decentralized education policy, curriculum guidelines for Holocaust education are often quite loose, and vary from one state to another, placing the burden on teachers to plan lessons and select the best instructional practices. Those who teach about the Shoah are also tasked with managing emotions in the classroom. Drawing on Ahmed's (2004) notion of circulating “sticky” objects of emotion,

Krieg (2015) conceptualizes the Holocaust as a "sticky" affective site where specific emotions accumulate. Emotions are tied up with teacher family biographies, as the history of National Socialism being taught is often that of their own parents and grandparents (Nägel & Kahle, 2018). Teachers simultaneously face socially standardized expectations that lessons on the Holocaust elicit specific student emotions (e.g., Brauer, 2016), as well as mediate indefinite feelings of guilt (Messerschmidt, 2018). The linkage of the Shoah in educational settings to contemporary issues, such as right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism, further charges Holocaust education with strong emotional expectations (Gryglewski, 2018). Recent German historical–pedagogical discourse is inundated with an "empathy hype" (Brauer, 2016), in which empathy is perceived as the most successful way to teach history and to educate about values and morality. As the Shoah is increasingly positioned as a global memory (Levy & Sznaider, 2006), Holocaust pedagogy has embraced utopian beliefs in the healing power of empathy to counter all forms of racism and prejudice (Sutcliffe, 2022).

Educators feel pressure to meet expectations that Shoah education constitutes a transformative experience but may fall short without a clear consensus on best practices (Stevick & Gross, 2015). Consequently, there exists a critical need for expanded professional development opportunities in Shoah education for German teachers. Teacher professional development (PD) is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of both formal and informal educational experiences, including conferences, seminars, workshops, and mentoring aimed at bolstering educators' pedagogical content knowledge. According to Shulman (1986), pedagogical content knowledge extends beyond simple subject matter knowledge to teachers' understanding of how to relay material effectively to others within specific teaching and learning milieus. For history teachers concerned with imparting the difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2003) of social trauma to students, PD can play a significant role in supporting their work (Levy & Sheppard, 2018). Researchers across the globe have found that participation in PD on the Holocaust is a key factor contributing to teachers' ability to cope with this difficult knowledge in the classroom (Gross, 2013). Reflecting on PD for Holocaust educators, Deustch et al. (2018, p. 95) call for teachers to be active participants in such training, in which they "should be encouraged to reflect upon their teaching philosophies, personal connections to the Holocaust, and the ways in which they have 'fit' the Holocaust into their existing meaning systems." However, few studies have documented how this process unfolds in Holocaust museums and memorials within the framework of site-based PD, such as that offered by Yad Vashem's ISHS.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL AS A PILGRIMAGE SITE

Rooted in empathy's presumed pedagogical power, Holocaust memorials and museums are typically designed to build empathy by drawing visitors into a "choreography of emotions" (Heyl, 2013) which prescribes specific behaviors (e.g., crying, silence) and emotional responses (e.g., empathy, consternation, grief) to their confrontation with history. In her comparative study of Holocaust memorial museums (including Yad Vashem), Alba (2015, p. 7) contends that these state-funded sites, embedded in national contexts, engage in the "sacralization of Holocaust memory" within a secular arena, resulting in a "space that is at once historical and metahistorical, secular and sacred." Employing narratives of what Sutcliffe (2022) terms *redemptive anti-antisemitism*, these sites imbue the Shoah with a quasi-religious tenor, and present Jewish suffering "as a redemptive message to the world" (Alba, 2015, p. 192). Redemptive anti-antisemitism, according to Sutcliffe (2022, p. 12), "draws its underlying emotional power, as did redemptive antisemitism for the Nazis, from the fact that it rests on a largely unspoken messianic conception of history, which rests in

turn on deep-seated connections in Western thinking between Jewish suffering and world-historical transformation." Goldberg's (2012, p. 190) critical analysis of Yad Vashem, which he labels an "international Holocaust 'shrine' of pilgrimage," points to the museum's presentation of a sacred, mythic narrative of anti-Semitism and Jewish victimhood, whose drama is ultimately redeemed by Zionism and Israel's miraculous foundation.

Yad Vashem's physical location in Jerusalem is central to the museum's formulation of a redemptive Zionist narrative. Research on Holocaust tourism (e.g., Feldman, 2008) has often focused on the transformative power of pilgrimage to primary, or in situ, sites in Europe marking locations where atrocities occurred. In contrast, Yad Vashem functions as an *in populo* memorial site, located "at a population and spiritual center of the people to whom a tragedy befell" (Cohen, 2011, p. 193). Despite Yad Vashem's distance from primary sites in Europe, Cohen's (2011) survey of European teacher–participants in ISHS seminars found they appreciated it as an authentic site for learning about the Shoah, in large part due to their interactions with Israeli society. Drawing on these conceptions of Yad Vashem as a secular, yet sacred, authentic *in populo* shrine, this article considers German teachers' touristic journeys abroad within an anthropological framework of pilgrimage. Although Yad Vashem is not an official religious shrine, research has increasingly explored the blurred boundaries between avowedly holy sites and destinations of secular pilgrimages (e.g., Margry, 2008).

Perhaps the most influential anthropological pilgrimage paradigm is Victor and Edith Turner's classic theory. Rooted in the Christian tradition, the Turners understand pilgrimage as a ritual and symbol-laden journey from home to a distant "center out there" in search of authentic experiences that may stimulate inner transformations (Turner, 1973, 1974; Turner & Turner, 1978). Extending van Gennep's (1960) fundamental work on rites of passage to religious pilgrimage, Turner and Turner (1978, p. 7) argue that perilous journeys to sacred spaces, away from structures of daily life, function as "something of a penance," facilitating atonement of sins and purification of the soul: "One piles up a store of nagging guilts, not all of which can be relieved in the parish confessional, especially when the priest himself may be party to some of the conflicts. When such a load can no longer be borne, it is time to take the road as a pilgrim." As in rites of passage, in which participants contemplate "the difficulties that peculiarly beset their own society, their personal problems, and the ways in which their own wisest predecessors have sought to order, explain, explain away, cloak, or mask … these mysteries and difficulties" (Turner, 1974, p. 242), a liminoid[3] state is central to the pilgrimage experience. In this transitory stage, "the actor-pilgrim is confronted by sequences of sacred objects and participates in symbolic activities which he believes are efficacious in changing his inner and, sometimes, hopefully, outer condition from sin to grace, or sickness to health," as intense feelings of solidarity and togetherness, or *communitas*, are forged between participants as a result of the shared social experience (Turner, 1973, p. 214).

Among scholars challenging the Turners' model, Eade and Sallnow (1991) approach pilgrimage not as a unifying, homogeneous phenomenon, but as a field of contestation. Describing pilgrimage as a realm of competing discourses, they highlight the multitude of perceptions imposed upon a shrine by different pilgrim groups, as well as "contradictions between official and non-official discourses, and conflicts between shrine custodians and shrine devotees," deriving from discrepant interpretations of the sacred center (Eade & Sallnow, 1991, p. 12). Although the "shrine staff might attempt … to impose a single, official discourse," Eade and Sallnow's (1991, p. 15) deconstructionist view posits that visitors bring their own varied desires and ideologies from home to the site, which "appears as a vessel into which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers, and aspirations." Despite the apparent binary opposition between contestation and *communitas*, Coleman's recent work (2022, p. 99) contends that these paradigms need not be mutually exclusive: "*Communitas* and contestation can clearly coexist and even engage each other in positive ways. … If conjoined, *communitas* and contestation have the capacity to create a new, hybrid trope, expressive

of the complexity of perspectives evident within any given shrine." Urging scholars not to be confined by rigid theoretical paradigms, Coleman (2022) suggests reframing pilgrimage through a wider lens of multiple, flexible articulations (and frictions) between porous ritual cores and more lateral spaces, relations, and practices. The current study considers what we can learn about Shoah education in contemporary Germany by considering teachers' journeys to Yad Vashem through such a wider pilgrimage frame of analysis as we contemplate the roles of emotions, distance, and place in teacher professional development.

RESEARCH FIELD AND METHODS

The investigation of teacher practices and emotions within a touristic framework calls for an ethnographic approach. Considering that ethnographers can "follow tourists throughout their journey and within their own rhythm," Picard (2016, p. 15) points to the strength of ethnography in tourism studies: "This focus on quotidian tourist practices and the means by which emotions are manifested and talked about presents us with the potential to observe patterns, processual principles and, also the limits of such emotional cultures." Furthermore, Urry (1990) notes that considering how social groups construct their tourist gaze while away elucidates our understanding of their society back home. Through our ethnographic study of German teacher groups at Yad Vashem, we consider what teachers' expectations and experiences in Jerusalem reveal about Holocaust education in contemporary Germany.

Annually (or biennially, in some cases) each federal state's education ministry sends groups of approximately 20 teachers to Israel to participate in a 5- to 10-day seminar at Yad Vashem's German Desk (the ISHS division responsible for educational workshops for teachers and students from Germanophone countries), where they encounter the Shoah from a Jewish perspective. Teacher training seminars at Yad Vashem are funded by various Shoah-related organizations, while German education ministries subsidize teacher travel expenses. Yad Vashem's German Desk staff, in conjunction with education ministry coordinators, plan teacher group itineraries and workshops in Israel, as well as preparatory meetings and post-seminar gatherings in Germany. During PD seminars, the German Desk staff demonstrate Yad Vashem-developed materials for Shoah education to the teacher–participants and discuss the future implementation of these materials in their schools. The programming also comprises workshops and lectures with external scholars and practitioners on Holocaust-related topics, as well as a survivor meeting and guided tours of the Yad Vashem campus and museum exhibitions. The leisure component of the program varies among federal states but may include trips to popular tourist sites, visits to other Israeli Shoah memorials, and encounters with actors and places connected with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Our study can be described as a "focused ethnography" (Knoblauch, 2005) including intensive field stays (5–10 days) with four teacher groups (three West German and one East German) during seminars in Israel between 2018 and 2020. Participant observation was carried out during Yad Vashem workshops, as wells as guided tours throughout Israel and the West Bank, bus rides, breaks, meals in hotels and restaurants, leisure time, and evening activities. Coleman (2022, p. 140) refers to these tangential spaces around a porous ritual center in which pilgrims engage in "ambiguously ritualized behaviors" as the penumbra, "an undetermined zone of activity that blends and blurs with wider, everyday social, ethical, and cultural environments." Participant observation in Yad Vashem and penumbral zones was complemented with 70 interviews with key actors, including Yad Vashem's German Desk staff, German trip coordinators, representatives of state education ministries, and 49 out of the 88 teacher–participants. In addition, we observed preparatory meetings for all four teacher groups and postseminar meetings for two groups in Germany. During pre- and post-seminar meetings, we conducted open-ended group discussions with teacher–participants

(with one group discussion instead held their first evening in Israel). Teachers were invited to share their expectations in preseminar group discussions and reflections on their experiences after returning to the classroom in postseminar discussions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, follow-up workshops were not held for the other two groups. Instead, we conducted individual interviews (either in person or via telephone or video call) with nine teachers from these groups. Interviews and group discussions aimed to stimulate narrative flow and unstructured, open exchange among the participants.

The German teacher–participants in our study ranged in age from 27 to 61 and worked in a variety of school types, including primary schools, middle schools, high schools, technical colleges, and schools for children with learning disabilities. Groups comprised teachers of multiple subject areas, including history, civics, languages, literature, art, ethics, economics, sports, pedagogy, and chemistry, as well as primary school teachers who teach multiple subjects. One group also included school psychologists, and two groups included teacher-trainers employed by the ministries of education. With few exceptions, most teachers came from different schools and did not know each other before the preparatory meetings. Given that more female than male teachers tend to apply for the seminars, most teacher–participants in each group are female, except for one group, whose participants were selected according to gender quotas. Five of the teacher–participants have a migration background, meaning that they, or at least one of their parents, were born in a country outside Germany.

Our binational author team consists of two German (native speaker) researchers and two Israel-based researchers, none of whom are affiliated with Yad Vashem, nor had any influence on the program's organization. Fieldwork was primarily conducted in German, except for two interviews with Yad Vashem staff and several workshop observations involving external lecturers who addressed teacher groups in English. German interview transcriptions and observation protocols were translated into English before joint team analysis through open and focused coding and writing theoretical memos adopted from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). An overarching theme emerged from the analysis and interpretation of the data: German teachers experienced the voyage to Yad Vashem as a secular pilgrimage rooted in Christian traditions of guilt, confession, and absolution.

EXPECTATIONS: EMOTIONAL CATHARSIS AND A PANACEA FOR ANTI-SEMITISM IN SCHOOLS

Considering German teachers' geographical proximity to European primary sites, memorials, and museums, we first consider the goals of federal states' sponsorship of teacher expeditions to Israel and teacher motivations for traveling abroad. State education ministries and teachers outlined two interconnected motivations for embarking on the journey to Yad Vashem: a miracle cure for contemporary anti-Semitism in German schools, and a transformative, emotional experience facilitated through contact with Jews and Jewish space.

Recent cooperation descriptions, state agreements, and media presentations emphasize modern anti-Semitism in Germany as a relevant motivation for sending German teachers to Israel. Several of the federal states' education ministries explicitly set forth expectations in their published materials and calls for application regarding the outcome of their teachers' participation in the Yad Vashem seminars. The continuing education division of one German state's education ministry declares on its website that the aim of the seminars is “to enable teachers to deal intensively with the problems of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, right-wing radicalism and violence in the classroom through intensive treatment of the Holocaust and personal encounters with contemporary witnesses.” As an example of promotional material disseminated to many teacher–participants in our study, this statement demonstrates how some education ministries directly link learning about the Shoah and meeting survivors in

Israel with the prospect of strengthening teachers' educational work against racism, anti-Semitism, and right-wing extremism in contemporary Germany.

Echoing this discourse, teachers ascribed their motivation to join the program to their distress over the rise of the New Right in Germany and the challenge of responding to modern anti-Semitism in their schools. West German teachers in our study generally correlated the latest waves of anti-Semitism with Muslim immigrants. For instance, before the seminar, Alexandra candidly associated her school's Muslim students with anti-Semitism: "My school has about eighty percent students with a migration background, although we have a lot of students who are of Muslim faith and since the aspect of anti-Semitism plays a major role. … We have to do an incredible amount of work" (group discussion, June 20, 2018). This linking of anti-Semitism with students of "Muslim faith" evinces dominant discourses within German society, positioning anti-Semitism as a problem attributed to distinct groups of students. Whereas West German teachers tended to point to Muslim students as the root of the problem, East German teachers recognized other student groups as sources of anti-Semitic sentiment, given that the Muslim population is significantly smaller in East Germany. Within the one group of East German teachers we observed, Frauke referenced anti-Semitism among her special education students, while Henning placed the blame on his vocational students, who frequently use anti-Semitic slurs. Henning related that "on the construction site, jokes on Jews are everyday life," and that his students have "no previous education, nothing comes from the parents' home" (field notes, December 2, 2019). Often overwhelmed by the task of addressing anti-Semitism within their schools, teachers are motivated to make the pilgrimage to Yad Vashem—a "treasure trove" of materials in the words of Till—by the expectation that they will return to Germany better equipped to respond to anti-Semitic acts (field notes, October 26, 2019). Likening Yad Vashem to a far-off repository of magic elixirs, teachers expect to return from Jerusalem with a cure-all curriculum for addressing anti-Semitism and the New Right in present-day German society.

Beyond the concrete acquisition of pedagogical materials, there is a sense among German education ministries and teachers that there is something unique about engaging with the history of the Shoah at Yad Vashem that will assist in the fight against new anti-Semitism. Dominique, a ministry representative from an East German state, likened Yad Vashem to "a cream topping, after Auschwitz and Theresienstadt," providing an experience surpassing that which is available locally in Europe (interview, August 31, 2020). Dominique's remark conjures the Turnerian notion of "the center out there," depicting Yad Vashem as the ultimate memorial site, which, while not remote in the traditional Turnerian sense, is peripheral to teachers' everyday life in Germany. Imagining purification by virtue of his physical presence within the homeland of the Jewish victims of National Socialism, Clemens, a West German teacher, used the word "catharsis" as he contemplated his impending visit:

> I kind of expect something mega emotional, actually, what I would call catharsis in the theatre. … In concentration camps I can look around, but then I consider that the perpetrators somehow did this. But this memorial [Yad Vashem] is somewhere in the heart of the people who somehow were mainly affected.
>
> (group discussion, June 20, 2018)

In contrast to European concentration camp memorials, Yad Vashem is imagined as a space symbolically free of perpetrator influence, where proximity to living and breathing Jews can facilitate an authentic cleansing of intergenerational guilt.

German teachers' socialization within a Christian-majority society shapes their attitudes toward Jewish people, as exemplified by Lara's remark: "Well, I grew up in a Christian family and it was always a theme that the Jews are the people of God, the apple of God's eye, and therefore a positive attitude right from the start" (interview, February 13, 2020).

Reflecting the continuity of a historically Christian-rooted differentiation between the Jews and Germans, Lara's use of the biblical phrase, "the apple of God's eye,"[4] alludes to the idea that Jews, as God's chosen people, are distinguished from others, or "marked apart for a special world-historical purpose, connected in some way to the advent of the messianic age," (Sutcliffe, 2022, p. 7). German perception of Jews as the ultimate "Other" is also rooted in historical traces of a Jewish/non-Jewish binary created by Nazi policies during the era of National Socialism (Kranz, 2022). In Germany, Shoah education is often conflated with teaching about Judaism, positioning the Holocaust as an exclusively "Jewish topic." During one workshop, Leah, a Yad Vashem staff member, asserted, "It is important to us that the subject of Judaism and the Holocaust do not coincide," to which Heinrich confirmed: "That usually happens in Germany" (field notes, October 29, 2019). Given this categorization of the Shoah as a "Jewish topic," some teachers discussed their impressions that students feel they have "nothing at all to do" with the Holocaust and that it is "far away" from them. This perception of distance is not only temporal, but spatial, considering few German students, or their teachers, have had previous personal experiences with Jews. Out of the 88 German teachers observed in this study, only one mentioned knowing and teaching Jewish students.

Considering that few teacher–participants have had previous personal contact with Jews in Germany (mostly via survivor encounters), Jews are exoticized, elevated, and endowed with a quasi-mythical status. Within this milieu where Jews are often objectified as Others, teaching about Judaism "quickly becomes folkloric," in the words of Florian, a religion teacher (field notes, October 27, 2019). Consequently, teachers anxiously awaited meeting the fabled Jew face-to-face in his homeland. For example, during the preparatory meeting, Niklas stated, "I really want to … culturally experience Israel and Jews from an inside perspective" (group discussion, September 30, 2019). Another teacher, Horst, expressed his hope that "now you can actively work on current things together with Israeli people and I find that particularly beautiful" (group discussion, June 20, 2018). Meeting with Jewish Israelis and forming new, or reinforcing existing, school partnerships with Yad Vashem, allows teachers to realize this hope concretely. Yet, against the background of German guilt, teachers project desires for "beautiful" new beginnings onto these encounters as they aspire to assuage the inherited burden of the atrocities committed by the perpetrator generation.

This desire to be emotionally moved was expressed by teachers from all four federal states. For example, Rita stated, "I expect inspiration that somehow something touches me, far from just cognitively understanding but deeper, touching me underneath" (group discussion, June 20, 2018). Beyond acquiring pedagogical content knowledge, Rita seeks a feeling akin to a spiritual awakening via an emotional encounter. Given that generations post-National Socialism typically grow up with vague and blurred outlines of events transmitted in intergenerational dialogues (Rosenthal, 2010), participants like Rita are searching to compensate for perceived emotional gaps. Gerda envisioned these anticipated emotional encounters in Jerusalem as especially intense: "I hope for an intensity through the duration of the stay and also through this special place" (group discussion, June 20, 2018). Other participants echoed this discourse, employing religious descriptors like "magical," "holy," and even "sacred" to position the journey as a spiritual pilgrimage.

Teachers explicitly connected their preconceptions of Yad Vashem as a transformational site to their belief in the contagious potential of their visit. Upon returning to everyday school life in Germany, participants expect to touch their students emotionally on account of their own profound experiences in Israel. For example, Claudia explained: "I really want to have a lively lesson, and if I go in there [i.e., the classroom] with more feeling because I've already been there, I can also convey that to the students, and especially with my students, that's the way I can catch them, only with the feeling" (group discussion, June 20, 2018). This desire for a transferable experience expresses the participants' shared professional challenge of engaging multicultural classrooms, comprising students increasingly disconnected from

the National Socialist era, in learning about the Holocaust. Teachers are acutely aware of the need to adopt a fresh approach and hope to touch the students emotionally by breaking out of their teaching routines, which typically consist of "going through the textbook pages," as Gabriel put it (group discussion, June 20, 2018). Reiner explained, "In this context, one should succeed in breaking out of this routine and not just hit the intellect, but somehow also the heart. … I find that is not an easy task and every enrichment experience there can just help" (group discussion, June 20, 2018). Teachers take the journey to Yad Vashem not only on the hunt for a panacea curriculum but also out of a desire to break out of their routine, in pursuit of transformative experiences to enable touching their students' hearts.

THE JOURNEY: LIMINAL ENCOUNTERS WITH JEWS AND JEWISH SPACE

Arriving in Israel full of hope and anticipation, the German teachers seek transformative emotional experiences and cures for anti-Semitism mediated through contact with Jews and Jewish space. In particular, it is interactions with Jews as liminoid symbols that facilitate the perceived cleansing of generational guilt, both within the Yad Vashem campus and the penumbral zones (Coleman, 2022) which teachers explore beyond the memorial site itself.

In contrast with European memorials marking sites of perpetration, the spatial and social configuration of Yad Vashem triggers emotions associated with teachers' personal connections to the perpetrator collective. Reflecting on the museum visit, Uli expressed, "I couldn't say anything yesterday because it touched me so much. … I was in Auschwitz and stood there and nothing happened, and that really touched me here yesterday" (field notes, October 29, 2019). Berta explained her feeling of self-consciousness as a German: "The closer we got to the concentration camps [i.e., the section in the museum exhibit], the more I had the feeling that I wanted to hide myself. I was ashamed as a German and thought, 'What might the other visitors think as they pass by us, as a German group?'" (field notes, February 10, 2020). As the German participants confront the details of the Shoah, they become fixated on guilt, often aroused by the sighting of ultra-Orthodox Jews, who, in their distinctive religious attire, fit preformed stereotypes steeped in "folkloric" imagery. After returning from the museum, Lara remarked, "It was particularly moving for me to see many Orthodox Jews in the museum. That would usually not happen to me in a museum, not in Dachau" (field notes, October 28, 2019). For many participants, their emotional reactions are caught up in their perception of Yad Vashem as a redemptive site. Jan expressed that he "found it very positive, to be there inside together with Jews and to see the children born afterwards" (field notes, October 28, 2019). The presence of visibly identifiable Jews—tangible relics of the shtetl who function as liminoid pilgrimage symbols—enhances the memorial's thaumaturgic power.

The exhibit's redemptive nature is referenced by Alex, a West German education ministry representative, as he explained his rationale for organizing teacher voyages to Yad Vashem. Alex acknowledged that while in his state they have "excellent memorial places regarding their didactic resources, also more of such memorial places," there was something decidedly special about Yad Vashem: "But to learn the history of the Shoah, the details until the last room of the main exhibition in Yad Vashem, which ends with [singing] *Hatikvah*[5] and [Israel's] independence, and then you walk out onto this terrace overlooking the mountains of Judea" (interview, September 23, 2020). Here Alex refers to the stunning view of the Judean Hills upon visitors' exit from the museum, where, after witnessing the seemingly inexplicable horrors of Jewish suffering, the Zionist landscape provides closure to the emotional narrative of redemptive anti-antisemitism (Sutcliffe, 2022). Leaving the exhibit, Maren recalled catching sight of a crying girl looking out over the mountains: "At the exit with this

crying girl, I thought it was my ancestors' fault, as a German. Whoa. And that got me. Also, it strengthened me again as a teacher that hatred among people must be prevented with every fiber" (field notes, February 10, 2020). Niklas also used the word "strengthened" to describe the exhibit's effect on him as he referenced the resurgence of the far-right: "I am driven by anger and ignorance, recently the AfD result in Thuringia[6] of over twenty percent, asking myself, 'How can I help to end the ignorance?' The visit to the museum strengthened me" (field notes, October 29, 2019). From the teachers' perspective, the narrative of redemptive anti-antisemitism opens the door to personal redemption via countering hatred and the cleansing of generational guilt, as further exemplified by the survivor encounter.

A group of East German teachers assembled in the Yad Vashem seminar room on a cold, windy morning as they excitedly chatted with each other about their excursion into the Old City the previous day. Leah interrupted the lively discussion as she introduced the day's sessions: "We're going to start with a survivor encounter. We will meet Josefa. She survived Auschwitz, among other things" (field notes, February 9, 2020). Survivor encounters at Yad Vashem consist of three parts: a preparatory workshop, the actual meeting, and a reflection with the teachers and seminar leader. During the preparatory workshop, teachers, like Berta, expressed high expectations for the encounter: "It's something special, this oral transmission, this oral history, the empathy" (field notes, February 9, 2020). Assuming the burden of transmitting authentic memories to students, teachers sought an emotional connection with a survivor. "Biographies make it more emotional," Moritz declared, with Lore reaffirming, "That's also the goal in the school, that the students connect" (field notes, February 9, 2020). Now taking on the role of "students" in the seminar, the teachers yearn for an emotion-filled experience to pass on to their own pupils.

After wrapping up the preparatory workshop, Leah escorted the 93-year-old Josefa into the seminar room. Elegantly dressed in a meticulously coordinated outfit of purple, plum, and periwinkle hues, Josefa carefully positioned family photographs, books, and brochures documenting her story on the table in front of her. Her face held a somber expression as she recounted loudly and clearly—in almost perfect German—her childhood in Hungary, the German occupation, the torturous deportation, the gassing and cremation of her parents, a cousin forced by SS guards to drown her newborn baby, diseases in the camps, the death march, the liberation, and finally the journey to Israel via a detention camp in Cyprus. At the conclusion of her moving narrative, Josefa warmly summoned the teachers: "So, and now come, whoever wants a hug can come" (field notes, February 9, 2020).

Eagerly accepting the invitation to experience a tangible connection, six teachers immediately jumped to their feet and approached. As the diminutive figure of Josefa wrapped her arms around the smiling German teachers towering above her, she planted kisses on each of their cheeks. Overwhelmed, some teachers whispered words of gratitude (e.g., "Thank you, that was so so so nice," "That was so beautiful."), while others wiped tears from their glistening eyes as they made physical contact with an authentic survivor—the holy grail of their secular pilgrimage. Gathering around Josefa, the teachers posed for a photograph to bear enduring witness to this sacred "moment in and out of time," (Turner, 1973, p. 214) in which representatives of the perpetrator collective and survivor finally embraced. "She forgave us," announced Frauke during the reflection session following the encounter (field notes, February 9, 2020). As Josefa appeared to expunge the guilty charge imparted upon members of the perpetrator collective, the German teachers assessed the encounter's success in terms of perceived authenticity and projected "forgiveness." Imbued with affective value, the photograph with Josefa functions as a souvenir of this instance of perpetrator–victim connection, memorializing this emotion-filled moment to be shared with students and colleagues upon return to Germany.

When the teachers ventured beyond Yad Vashem to explore Jerusalem, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by unfamiliar Jewish cultures. Ben, a German Desk educator,

emphasized the lack of visible Jewish presence in contemporary Europe when guiding through Yad Vashem's "Valley of the Communities." As the teachers meandered through the maze of towering rock slabs engraved with names of destroyed Jewish communities, Ben recalled long-gone Jewish marketplaces in European cities, such as Groningen, likening their former hustle and bustle to Jerusalem's open-air Mahane Yehuda Market (known as "the *shuk*" in Hebrew), where vendors hawk colorful produce, baked goods, meats, fish, and cheeses in stalls lining narrow alleyways: "The same jokes, the same noise, the same food. That no longer exists in Europe today" (field notes, October 27, 2019). For many teachers, the *shuk* functioned as a central attraction in the evenings, when they would unwind over local Israeli beers and revel in what Heinrich referred to as an "exotic" atmosphere (interview, October 30, 2019). In the *shuk*, teachers engaged in positive encounters with Israelis, which, in retrospect, they perceived as authentic experiences. "I was surprised by this friendliness, that we as Germans are included here without anger or rage," Gaby commented, while Beate recalled how, in the *shuk* they "got wreaths of flowers from Israeli hippies" in what is perceived as a symbolic peace offering (field notes, February 13, 2020). Such experiences in the *shuk* reflect the porosity of Yad Vashem as a pilgrimage site, whose redemptive possibilities diffuse into the surrounding landscapes explored by teachers in their leisure time.

Teachers expressed surprise when they stumbled upon Jews who do not fully conform to stereotypes constructed as a result of Jewish invisibility in Germany. Several participants repeatedly referenced the "rabbis with the techno-van" as "the craziest experience there" (field notes, October 29, 2019). Here the teachers refer to an ultra-Orthodox sect colloquially referred to as the Na Nachs,[7] known for driving around Israeli cities in colorful, graffiti-covered vans while blasting religious-techno music from large speakers mounted onto the roof. When stopping at red traffic lights, the Na Nachs—donning traditional beards, *peyot* (sidelocks), and characteristic white knitted *kippot* (skullcaps)—hop out of the van and dance, bringing an impromptu, rave-like party to the middle of the intersection, where random passersby often join in the raucous celebration. Bert reminisced about dancing in Jerusalem's streets at one o'clock in the morning: "That was a day, from the Final Solution up to the rabbi with the techno-van. Who would have thought that the religious Jews would be there with that techno-van on the way? That was hot" (field notes, October 30, 2019). Although they bear visible religious symbols corresponding to German stereotypes, the Na Nachs and their joyful exuberance catch the participants, wallowing in the collective guilt of the perpetrator society following the day's lecture on the Final Solution, off guard. In this moment, as perpetrator and victim collectives frolic wildly together in the streets of the Jewish homeland, the dance assumes the role of a purgative ritual, the climax of the pilgrimage through which German guilt is seemingly absolved.

When German teachers experience daily Jewish life in Israel, their positive encounters with Jews offer a longed-for sense of purification. Episodes in which German teachers perceive a connection between themselves and Jews—such as when dancing together with the Na Nachs or hugging Josefa—precipitate feelings of relief. As Karla put it: "Especially as a German, I found it comforting to know that this place [i.e., Israel] now exists for the people, despite all the difficulties we know about" (field notes, October 27, 2019). As German teachers fetishize Jews as sacred objects, their encounters mitigate inherited guilt through first-hand observations of Jewish life thriving despite Nazi attempts at annihilation. Seeing Jews touring the museum, welcoming German tourists with open arms, and dancing in the streets, conveys a sense of normalcy, which sets the teachers at ease. Berta summarized a key takeaway of the trip as "I learned here that Jews are normal people" (field notes, February 13, 2020). It is only when the teachers leave the German context and travel to Israel that they acquire a new understanding of Jewish "normality" with the potential to lift teachers' burden of emotional heritage.

DISCREPANT VISIONS: BETWEEN *COMMUNITAS* AND CONTESTATION

Upon their return to Germany, teachers from all four groups reminisced about the Israel journey and the Yad Vashem seminar with fervor. Teachers described a sense of Turnerian *communitas*—a spontaneous unity, a "fellowship with like-minded souls" (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 31)—which developed among themselves following their shared thaumaturgic experiences. Max reflected on the close bond that formed between the seminar participants: "I enjoyed that we quickly became a small internal group of teachers, with a good rapport among each other" (interview, August 11, 2020). Having forged tight-knit connections among traveling companions, Max, along with seven other teachers from the East German group, used their WhatsApp group to plan a reunion at an Israeli-style restaurant often subjected to anti-Semitic attacks. "I almost cannot tell you the name," Moritz chuckled, referring to the WhatsApp group, "We call it Mossad" (interview, August 17, 2020). Likening their return from pilgrimage with initiation into Israel's top-secret intelligence service, Moritz, Max, and their co-participants imagine having experienced something unique, shared only among themselves, and which bestows sense and identity to the intimate group now tasked with a special mission to be multipliers for nonpilgrims.

Back in the Christmas market tent, Lydia likewise described the Israel trip as a communal experience that separates her emotionally from nonpilgrims:

> I also found it so crazy fun today just to talk, and somehow knowing everyone has experienced the same thing … someone who hasn't experienced it, is something completely different to talk to. … As we teach it to students now and family and friends, I still feel very alone and somehow overwhelmed at the same time as I feel great desire. (field notes, December 12, 2019)

As the teachers negotiated what exactly their shared experience is about, they collectively classify it as something sacred and special, but also fragile and easily damaged if shared with others carelessly. Along with newfound peer communities, teachers return home hoping to achieve a multiplier effect, whereby the inspiration discovered at Yad Vashem may be transferred to those colleagues and students who remained at home. Yet like awe-struck pilgrims, participants like Lydia feel overwhelmed and have difficulty putting the transformative voyage into words. As Tanja explained, "Every time when someone asked [about the trip] I had to wait a second and consider, 'Where do I start? What will I tell?'"

Lydia chimed in: "Well, I kind of have the feeling that you have to claim it, because we were allowed to make this trip, that we are now multipliers" (field notes, December 12, 2019). The attention received by teachers like Tanja and Lydia confirms their own classification of a special, life-changing experience in Israel, despite the content of the experience remaining unspoken, similar to the expectations formulated before the trip. Likewise, teachers express an eagerness to share their enlightening pilgrimage to produce a cadre of multipliers, yet they do not articulate whether they are multipliers for the seminar content or for the emotional experience.

Teacher–participants return uplifted, with renewed motivation to teach the Shoah in their own classrooms. "[The seminar] really motivated me that I should do something about the topic," Martin declared in a posttrip interview (June 18, 2020). Freshly equipped with Yad Vashem's books and curricular materials (some gifted to participants and others purchased separately at Yad Vashem's bookstore), returning German teachers are initially enthusiastic about the potential contagious power of these souvenirs brought home from the Holy Land. However, while motivated, Emilia explained the challenge of integrating these materials into practice: "I also bought a lot because I actually thought that these are all such interesting

materials. … And then first of all, there was the thought, 'What do you actually do with it?' … When I thought about how I would use it again, that was difficult" (interview, July 2, 2020). Caught up in the overwhelming emotions of *communitas*, returnees are full of aspiration, yet may become disoriented as they attempt to reconcile their transformation with the mundane social reality in Germany.

The teachers' *communitas*-like experience as a relatively homogeneous, Christian-socialized group stands in opposition, however, to the "official" discourse of Yad Vashem as an Israeli museum-memorial with a historical mandate to present a Jewish-Zionist narrative. As the "caretakers" of the shrine, the German Desk staff underscored the Jewish perspective of the institution during the teachers' introduction to Yad Vashem's pedagogical concept. "In principle, this is actually a Jewish motivation that began back then and that is actually vital," explained Ronit, a German Desk educator (interview, October 24, 2018). Dana, also from the German Desk, tied this specifically Jewish outlook to the land of Israel during a personal interview, stating, "The Shoah is very present here because of the post-war history and the survivors and their children" (interview, September 9, 2020). Leah echoed her colleagues, "We want them [i.e., the teacher-participants] to deal with the Jewish perspective," before adding, "But there is also an expectation, so to speak, of Germans being able to reconcile with Jews. And that is often perceived as a disturbance when Jews do not want it, or do not get involved" (interview, February 12, 2020). In particular, it is the Yad Vashem personnel who feel this disturbance within a field of contestation.

Given German teachers' lofty expectations of catharsis and reconciliation, their interpretation of the site as a source for the absolution of intergenerational guilt stirs up frictional energies (Coleman, 2022) among the German Desk staff. For example, when the teachers converged on Josefa following her lecture, Leah expressed her dismay by refusing to be included in the photograph, which she later derided as a "trophy" when interviewed. Lena, another member of the German Desk team, recalled how she resented participating in "stupid ceremonies" conducted by teacher groups at the culmination of the Israel journey:

> I was forced to stand hand in hand around the Janusz Korczak[8] memorial, and found myself singing *Hava nagila hava*[9] and such things … I see here basically the groups need to leave something in Yad Vashem, to say goodbye to this place. But I said to myself, I don't want to do this anymore, to sing stupid songs somewhere in Yad Vashem. (interview, February 28, 2020)

It is striking that the very ceremonies and improvised rituals which forge *communitas* among the German teachers are those articulations that simultaneously function as a source of contestation. Lena's discomfort as non-Jewish German teachers encircle a monument for Jewish victims while raising their voices together in joyous song highlights the discrepant meanings attributed to the site by teacher–participants and the Jewish staff. Within the Jewish-Israeli narrative, Yad Vashem memorializes the Zionist redemption from slaughter to statehood; for the German teachers, collectively rejoicing in gratitude one final time for their perceived exculpation, Yad Vashem offers a personal redemption from inherited guilt.

Contestation between divergent conceptions of Yad Vashem's program was made apparent as Dana described a farewell letter the German Desk received from one participant:

> [It was] something like, "I'm sorry what the Christian people did to the Jewish people and I would like reconciliation. And we love the Jews." That was the end. It was very strange. And we really thought, okay, what did we do wrong? In several seminars it comes up. … Christian Germans, reconciliation, and loving of the Jews, is something which repeats. This wish of reconciliation comes as … we can take the heavy weight from our shoulders and put it away. And then this

> "we love the Jews" … it's very problematic, like very philo-Semitic, and for me very irritating, because here we have an educational approach and it's not about reconciliation. … I wasn't asking for you to love me. (interview, March 31, 2019)

The German Desk develops sophisticated workshops and innovative materials as it attempts to convey pedagogical approaches to Holocaust education from a Jewish perspective. But much to the staff's chagrin, what ultimately impresses the teachers are emotional episodes and impromptu rituals linked to "authentic" reconciliation with Jews. Considering Eade and Sallnow's (1991) analogy of the shrine as an "empty vessel," in the end, the German teachers experience the very desires and emotions carried with them from Germany to Yad Vashem and its environs, despite the "official" discourse presented by the German Desk staff.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our focused ethnography of German teacher voyages to Jerusalem highlights the power of place and distance in shaping perceptions and experiences of professional development on the Shoah. Yad Vashem may not mark the location of atrocities, yet the site nevertheless functioned as a "center out there" for German educators. Unlike the abundance of primary memorial sites closer to home on the soil where the crimes of the Shoah actually occurred, and which are managed, curated, and funded by the successor state of the National Socialist regime, Yad Vashem represents a space uncontaminated by perpetrators. Situated in the Jewish successor state of the victim collective, Yad Vashem is not only geographically peripheral to the familiar European memorial landscape, but its focus on Jewish perspectives contrasts with an inherited, routinized, and perpetrator-centered German memorial culture. Furthermore, Jewish invisibility in contemporary Germany and historical distinctions between "Jews" and "Germans" position Jews as exoticized "Others" to be encountered on expeditions abroad into the Jewish homeland. The German teacher–participants in our study, most of whom are socialized within a Christian-majority society, imagined Yad Vashem as brimming with possibilities for the absolution of generational guilt otherwise inaccessible at home. Supported by German state education ministries, teachers embarked on secular pilgrimages rooted in Christian traditions of guilt, confession, and forgiveness, hoping to return from Jerusalem equipped with the elusive panacea for contemporary anti-Semitism in their schools after having experienced an emotional and transmissible catharsis.

Once in Israel, detached from the routines of everyday German society, teachers acted out their anticipations and fantasies, both within the Yad Vashem campus and the penumbral zones surrounding the site. Participants experienced the intensive social bonding of Turnerian *communitas* through direct contact with Jews, who, fetishized as sacred objects, unwittingly took part in symbolic rituals which substantiated teachers' expectations. As German teachers extemporaneously hugged Holocaust survivors and danced together with religious Jews in the streets of Jerusalem, a much sought-after cathartic relief confirmed the experience's authenticity. In this "liminal world where the ideal is felt to be real" (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 30), teachers bestowed more significance on shared collective experiences and belief in their contagious power than on pedagogical content knowledge acquisition. To the frustration of the German Desk staff, the teachers' voyages seem to be not about learning as much as about feeling. The impromptu rituals which build *communitas* among teacher groups are the same articulations which result in contestation, as the German Desk staff become disturbed by the teachers' quest for personal redemption that distorts the site's official Jewish-Zionist redemption narrative and overshadows efforts to present a historical–pedagogical approach.

German teachers' motivations, practices, and encounters in Israel reflect the prevailing state of Holocaust education in German classrooms, where teaching about the Shoah is understood as an antidote to contemporary anti-Semitism. Studies in German schools (e.g., Chernivsky & Lorenz-Sinai, 2023) demonstrate that teachers are overwhelmed by anti-Semitism, and anti-Semitic acts are typically explained by the absence of Jewish children. Given this lack of Jewish visibility, teachers rationalize that encounters with Jews should dispel, or prevent, anti-Semitic attitudes. Teachers aim to introduce students to living Jews as a pedagogical intervention by organizing synagogue visits, survivor encounters, and exchanges with Israeli schools. German Jews themselves have recognized this desire, exemplified by the establishment of the "Meet a Jew" program,[10] which facilitates face-to-face meetings between Jews and non-Jews. The teachers in our study carry these schemas and impulses with them to Israel as they are exposed, for the first time, to a Jewish majority society. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the initiation of encounters between Jews and non-Jews. In fact, Feldman's (2018, p. 44) reflection highlights the enriching nature of German-Israeli collaboration on a project about Holocaust memory, while still acknowledging how "national cultures continue to shape sensibilities." Yet, if encounter pedagogy is used in response to anti-Semitism, there is a danger that anti-Semitism is implicitly understood as something that has to do with Jews, as the responsibility for dealing with anti-Semitism is relegated to those affected by it through encounter as intervention. In the 1950s, Adorno (1998, p. 101) already recognized the problematic assumption behind the initiation of such encounters: "One assumes that anti-Semitism in some essential way involves the Jews and can be countered through concrete experiences with Jews." Jews, therefore, become objectified as instruments intended to disrupt false prejudices through their pleasant encounters with Germans.

Despite the historical–pedagogical approach presented by Yad Vashem's German Desk, our observations suggest that these Jewish encounters, onto which German teachers project emotional significance, persist as the most profound takeaway from the journey. Yet it remains to be seen if, and how, teachers might translate their highly physical, emotional, and contextualized experiences in Israel beyond the events and encounters themselves, and into concrete classroom practices. What is made clear from our study, however, is that emotions, rooted in contact and cultural-historical socialization, are a powerful pedagogical force, especially in the "sticky," affective field of Holocaust education (see Krieg, 2015). Rather than downplaying or ignoring this inevitable "stickiness," we suggest that teachers' emotions, longings, and desires, and the socio-historical contexts within which they are embedded, must become an even stronger object of reflection and methods in Holocaust professional development. Perhaps once emotions are openly processed, teachers will be better prepared to engage with a more historical and intellectual approach, such as that offered at Yad Vashem. We hope that our research might inspire future ethnographic studies among students and teachers within German classrooms, exploring how emotional, touristic experiences abroad can function as sources of reflection and pedagogical inspiration for addressing contemporary issues at home. Considering the significance of emotional encounters uncovered in this study, we urge a careful consideration of how to ensure emotion-laden experiences in museum and memorial settings not only remain ephemeral events, situational memories, or narrative points of reference but also cultivate sustainable didactic processes and reflections.

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ENDNOTES

[1] All names used are pseudonyms.

[2] For the complete research report, see Lorenz et al. (2021).

[3] Contrasting with van Gennep's use of the term "liminal" within traditional societies, Turner prefers "liminoid," or quasi-liminal, to describe voluntary pilgrimage in postindustrial contexts.

[4] See, for example, Deuteronomy 32:10, on God's care for the nation of Israel: "He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye."

[5] Israel's national anthem, whose title translates to "The Hope."

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

[7] A subgroup of Bratslav Hassidim whose adherents follow the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, a rabbi who lived in nineteenth-century Ukraine. Their core belief is that spreading joy is a *mitzvah*, or commandment, which will usher in the coming of the Messiah.

[8] Janusz Korczak was a Jewish-Polish educator who perished alongside the children of his Warsaw Ghetto orphanage in the Treblinka death camp.

[9] *Hava Nagila* ("Let us rejoice") is a Jewish folk song, traditionally sung at weddings and other celebrations, that has also infiltrated mainstream popular culture.

[10] See https://www.meetajew.de.

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