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In the shoes of the other: an educational trip to Auschwitz Birkenau increases high-school students' perspective taking and identification with Jews

Magnus Lindén [a], Fredrik Björklund[a] and George Wilkes[b]

[a]Department of Psychology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden; [b]School of Security Studies, King's College London, London, UK

ABSTRACT
We investigated whether empathy and identification with Jews as a group is affected by a Holocaust education trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Data was collected before and after the trip and compared with a control group. The mean level of both perspective taking and identification with Jews as a group increased in the educational-trip group. Increased closeness to Jews as a group was related to increased perspective taking. We discuss the role for Holocaust education in fostering an understanding of Jewish life and culture and for stimulating perspective taking by providing an opportunity to put oneself in the shoes of the other.

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Introduction

For decades, the Holocaust has been a key topic in school teaching[1,2] serving a range of objectives, including to decrease racism, antisemitism, or anti-democratic tendencies. Despite this, experimental approaches investigating these effects are lacking.[3] This applies not least to educational trips to concentration and extermination camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau. Pettitt[4] points out that the potential effects of visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau on prosocial or democratic attitudes and behaviors are scarcely known. Hale[5] suggests that it is important for science to look at how Holocaust education influences specific parts of the attitude change process; for example, by investigating how different sets of beliefs are changed. In this study, we aim to fill parts of this knowledge gap by longitudinally investigating the extent to which empathy – a concept related to an ability to take another person's perspective – and identification with Jews as a group – a concept related to the perception of group membership – is affected in Swedish high school students who participate in a Holocaust-based educational trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Both empathy and identification with social groups are factors connected to prosocial behaviors,[6] active bystandership[7] and intergroup reconciliation.[8] The importance

CONTACT Magnus Lindén Magnus.Linden@psy.lu.se Department of Psychology, Lund University, Box 213, Lund SE-221 00, Sweden

of working with empathy and identification in Holocaust education has also been stressed by Bilewicz, Witkowska, Stubig, Beneda and Imhoff[9] and in a recent call, Bussu, Leadbetter, and Richards[10] recommend that research investigating the impact of visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau on learning processes should longitudinally investigate issues of historical empathy and social identity and how these factors relate to each other. Given that some visitors to concentration and extermination camps have been charged for displaying Nazi propaganda – for example, making a Nazi salute in front of the Arbeit Macht Frei gate – and given the risk of teachers working with empathy in a way that defeats its purpose (see for example Hondius[11]), the question of the expected outcomes of Holocaust education at Auschwitz becomes even more important. With this in mind, we will now briefly go through previous findings on empathy and social identification and their relevance to Holocaust education and related research.

Empathy and Holocaust education

Empathy is defined by Batson, Ahmad, Lishner and Tsang[12] as 'an other-oriented emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else' (p. 486). Davis[13] further divides the concept into Empathic Concern (EC) and Perspective Taking (PT). EC concerns 'other-oriented' feelings of sympathy. PT concerns spontaneously adopting the point of view of other human beings and relates to non-egocentric behavior, i.e. the capacity to subordinate the perspective of the self and instead engage with a larger perspective. Previous research suggests that participating in Holocaust education in a middle school context increases both empathic concern[14] and historical empathy, i.e. an understanding of thoughts, feelings and circumstances leading up to certain behavior in a group of people during a specific time period. The possibility of attaining historical empathy is greater when teachers put effort into endorsing a feeling of care towards victims of genocide, which may in turn influence the students' attitudes and behavior.[15] Further, research on visitors to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum shows that people randomly assigned to reflect upon the Holocaust through creating art had higher state empathy compared to a control group of visitors.[16] Additionally, video testimonies brought about higher empathy than a control condition using traditional textbooks in a sample of Hungarian 11th grade students partaking in Holocaust education.[17] Finally, visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau influenced the level of empathy towards Palestinians only among Israeli high-school students who initially had a more positive attitude towards Palestinians and who embraced a more universally oriented worldview, i.e. who saw suffering in universal rather than national terms.[18] With regard to methods, as opposed to the present study, the measures of empathy, empathic concern and perspective taking were not separated in the latter study but treated as one variable. Furthermore, the results suggest that studies investigating changes in empathy towards an out-group should include a measure of ethnocentrism or identification with an in-group. These studies suggest that empathy is – at least temporarily – affected by Holocaust education. Qualitatively oriented studies on Holocaust education provide further support. For example, Bornstein and Naveh[19] found that empathy played an important role in critical reflection on themes connected to the Holocaust, including communicating the results to others, in an Israeli undergraduate course. Summing up, there is a relatively sparse experimental literature on Holocaust education and empathy. The studies that do exist suggest

that Holocaust education should be able to influence openness to engage with empathy, which is what we will investigate in the current study.

Identification with groups and Holocaust education

The idea that students will identify more with the Jewish group after Holocaust education is based on social identity theory. Social identity is defined by Tajfel[20] as 'that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership' (p. 255). The theory states that people categorize themselves into social groups based on sharing a group-defining feature with the other members (e.g. religion or national citizenship), and that this increases the experience of similarity among them.[21] Not much research has empirically investigated how Holocaust education affects social identity. A study on German high-school students suggests that Holocaust education decreased the recourse to national identity in the group studied.[22] However, national identity also included positive aspects, such as identifying with the post-war development of democracy in Germany. Interestingly, the changes in the sense of identity noted were not accompanied by less prejudice towards members of other groups. Relating back to the finding by Shechter and Salomon[23] connecting increases in empathy to a universally oriented worldview, this is relevant, since evidence suggest that stronger identification with one's in-group is related to more in-group bias[24] and derogation of out-group members.[25] Further, in a longitudinal study on Jewish-American high school seniors participating in the 'March of the Living', a Holocaust educational tour where students visit concentration/death camps and Jewish historical sites in Poland and Israel, Nager, Pham, and Gold[26] found no increase in Jewish identity (in terms of Jewish values and practices). They did find a significant increase in personal identity, on an item focusing on how much being Jewish was central to how the participants identified themselves, but this finding was interpreted as of limited scientific value in that the increase of the mean value was relatively small. Since the sample was Jewish-American, it is unclear whether European Jews were seen as an in-group.

Finally, Bilewicz and Wojcik[27] made a longitudinal study on a sample of Polish high-school students visiting Auschwitz as part of their history curriculum. They found an increase on a measure of including the victims into the self, between a measurement before the trip and one month after. Although the finding was interpreted as an empathic reaction, which was not actually measured (but rather inclusion in the self), from a social identity perspective it suggests that visiting Auschwitz leads to an increase in identifying with Jews as a group. With regard to design, the sample was not compared to a control group of students, which will be done in the present study. Summing up, existing research suggest that Holocaust education increases non-Jewish students' identification with Jews as a group.

Connections between empathy and social identity

Studies suggest that perspective taking leads to increased merging of one's self with an out-group,[28] to identification with out-group members,[29] and to more positive intergroup attitudes.[30] One mechanism behind the latter seems to be that perspective taking leads to a feeling of increased closeness to other people,[31] which, if it is related

to members of an out-group, elicits a feeling of 'we-ness', i.e. moving towards a common ingroup identity.[32] Since studies investigating the relationship between perspective taking and self/out-group merging in a real-life context are scarce,[33] investigating this relationship in the context of Holocaust education should contribute to closing the knowledge gap. Of particular relevance is whether an increase in perspective taking in non-Jews is related to an increase in a feeling of closeness to Jews as a group after participating in Holocaust education.

The current study

The Swedish government has supported Holocaust education for three decades[34] and the number of Swedish students visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau has increased steadily.[35] Despite this, there are no national guidelines regulating how study trips to Holocaust memorial sites should be arranged.[36] As for the particular high school in southern Sweden that the current study involved, each year, around twenty third-year students (age 17-18) take part in a Holocaust educational trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Students volunteer to apply without teacher direction based on personal interest and are interviewed by school staff for admission purposes. The program includes a short preparatory process before the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the trip to Poland and the camp lasts for five days. The preparation includes a visit to the local synagogue, a short historical overview of the Holocaust, and a one-hour lecture on the psychology of evil and how to counteract violence and genocide through moral courage. During the trip to Poland, the students stay in the city of Kraków and visit Auschwitz-Birkenau for one day. They also visit the Jewish quarter of Kraków, the Jewish cemetery, the wartime Jewish ghetto, and Oskar Schindler´s factory. These activities last for three days and are managed by a local expert-guide. In the current study, we made a pre – and post-measurement of empathy and social identification with Jews. The pre-measurement was taken during one of the lectures in the preparatory phase. The post-measurement was taken in the two weeks after homecoming from Poland. Additionally, we collected post-measurement data from a sample of students not partaking in the Holocaust education. This was our control group. Based on related previous findings and theory, we hypothesized that (1) the mean level of perspective taking, empathic concern and identification with Jews should increase in the Holocaust education group, (2) that an increase in perspective taking should predict increased feelings of closeness to Jews as a group, and (3) that the Holocaust education group should have higher post-measurement mean values on these variables than the control group. To capture the affective reactions the visit elicited in the students, we also provided an open-ended question to both groups focusing on their feeling towards Auschwitz-Birkenau. The responses were not used for evaluating the hypotheses, the purpose was rather to provide a glimpse of how the visit was experienced by the students and to identify differences between the groups.

Method

Participants

143 students (age 17-18) from a high school in southern Sweden participated in the study. 46 participated in the Holocaust education and 93 were controls. Both the

Holocaust education group, which consisted of non-Jewish students, and the control group consisted of an average of 60% females and 40% males. The Holocaust education group did not differ from the control group concerning their level of education about the Holocaust before participating in the program.

Material

Empathy

The Perspective taking and the Empathic Concern subscales from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index[37] were used to measure empathy. The former consists of eight items and the latter of six. Examples of items measuring perspective taking are 'Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place' and 'I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view' (reverse coded). Examples of items measuring empathic concern are 'I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me' and 'When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them' (reverse coded). All items were measured on a 5-point response scale ranging from '1 = Do not agree at all' to '5 = Completely agree'. Cronbach´s alpha (which assesses the degree of interrelationship between the items, higher values indicating that a scale is internally consistent) for the pre – and post-measurement, which included both groups, was .53. and .76 for perspective taking and .73 and .79 for empathic concern. To create change variables, we subtracted the pre-measurement data from the post-measurement data. Accordingly, positive numbers represent an increase over time.

Identification with Jews as a group

A slightly modified version of the 'Identification with All Humanity Scale'[38] was used to measure social identification with Jews as a group. On four items, the respondents rated, on a 5-point response scale, how close they felt to Jews as a group, how much they had in common with Jews as a group, how much they identified with Jews as a group, and how much they cared (felt upset, wanted to help) when bad things happen to Jews. To get an overall score for each participant, the four items were added to an index. Cronbach´s alpha for the pre – and for the post-measurement (which included both groups) was .58. and .61. As we did for the empathy measure, we created an index subtracting the pre-measurement data on closeness to Jews from the post-measurement data.

Identification with Swedes as a group

To measure social identification with Swedes as a group, we used the same items as above except that the word Jews was changed to Swedes. Cronbach´s alpha for the pre- and post-measurement (which again included both groups) was .52. and .73.

Open-ended question

The open-ended question focused on participants' feelings towards Auschwitz-Birkenau. The question, translated to English, read: *Describe the feelings you have for Auschwitz-Birkenau as a phenomenon (i.e. what happened there) and as a site.* The space

given on the form for the response had a maximum of nine rows of text. All examples of responses provided below were translated from Swedish to English by the first author.

Procedure

Pre-measurement data for the three groups that constituted the Holocaust education group was collected in September 2019, March 2023, and September 2023, around two weeks before departing to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Post-measurement data was collected within two weeks after homecoming. Data for the control group was collected as part of the regular teaching activities. All participants' ethical rights were considered in that participation was voluntary, the participants were anonymous to the researchers, and they were aware that they had the possibility to quit their participation at any time. To investigate whether the mean value of the investigated variables changed significantly between the pre – and post-measurement responses in the Holocaust education group, comparisons were made using standard t-tests for dependent means. To investigate if a relative increase in perspective taking predicted a relative increase in closeness to Jews, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used. This statistical technique analyses the unique relationship between a dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors. Each predictor is put into the analysis in a separate block, which provides a relative estimate of their unique contribution. In the first block, all baseline variables were entered into the analysis. In the second block, the change variable of perspective taking was entered. Finally, to investigate if the mean value of the Holocaust education group differed from the control group at the post-measurement, standard t-tests for independent means were used.

Reactions to Auschwitz-Birkenau

To investigate the open-ended question, the first and second author analyzed the responses with the aim of identifying both common themes and the frequency of each theme in the two groups. We did not analyze the responses from all participants in the control group. Instead, to match the education group 40 students were randomly chosen from the sample. In the analytical process, which followed the guidelines for a thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke,[39] the first author first examined and categorized the raw data independently. This was done by identifying common themes. In the next step the second author examined the raw data and analyzed the responses according to the categories suggested by the first author. The few discrepancies between the two coders were discussed. The analysis revealed six different themes (see Table 1). The first category concerned reactions where the students' reported feelings of unreality, or incomprehensibility, or that they could not describe their experience in words. One example is a participant who wrote that 'words cannot explain what I feel. It is so horrible that something like this has happened'. The second category was concerned with feelings of physical sickness, being in distress or being disgusted. One participant wrote that 'it felt horrible and made me nauseated. (I) tried to get an understanding of what happened at the site while I felt the lump in my stomach growing bigger and bigger'. The third category concerned reactions indicating that the students had

Table 1. Qualitative analysis of open-ended question.

Category	*Holocaust education Group (N = 42)*	*Control Group (N = 40)*
Feeling of unreality, incomprehensibility, indescribability	41%	13%
Feeling sick, in distress, being disgusted	17%	8%
Hard to take in, feeling nothing, emptiness	29%	0%
Emotional expressions in more general terms (e.g. terrible/ awful)	26%	75%
Important to remember what happened	7%	30%

difficulties taking in what happened at the site, or felt nothing or an emptiness inside. An example of this reaction is a participant writing that 'I think that what happened there is horrible but also hard to take in. It is like it is too many horrible things that has happened so one almost doesn't want to understand it'. The fourth category concerned emotional expressions, appraising the situation in more general terms. One student wrote 'I think that what happened there is awful and horrible. It is really something special in the history of mankind and so strange that it was allowed to happen'. Finally, the fifth category concerned the importance of remembering/learning from what happened in Auschwitz-Birkenau and/or the need to work towards not letting it happen again. One straightforward example of this from a participant reads: 'We must actively and every day prevent that it is repeated'. It is apparent that visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau gave rise to strong cognitive and affective reactions, e.g. feelings of unreality and difficulties in comprehending what happened, distress, and physical symptoms such as nausea. From the greater distance which marks the comments given by participants from the control group, the emotional expressions offered were more abstract and there were more distancing normative expressions, such as 'terrible', and 'awful', and an emphasis on never letting it happen again.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are presented in Tables 2 and 3. As can be seen in Table 2, perspective taking relates positively both to a higher empathic concern and to a feeling of closeness to Jews, for the Holocaust education group and for the control group.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

		Holocaust education group		Control group
Variable	*M (SD)* All	Pre *M (SD)*	Post *M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Empathy				
Perspective Taking	26.56 (3.77)	26.89 (2.86)	27.66 (3.11)	26.04 (3.95)
Empathic Concern	24.76 (3.71)	25.26 (3.19)	25.37 (3.24)	24.47 (3.91)
Social identity				
Identification with Jews	12.85 (3.15)	12.11 (2.70)	14.07 (2.92)	12.28 (3.11)
Closeness to Jews	2.88 (.96)	2.44 (.81)	3.44 (.91)	2.62 (.86)
Closeness to Swedes	4.12 (.70)	4.09 (.66)	4.22 (.63)	4.08 (.73)

Table 3. Post-measurement bivariate correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perspective Taking	–	.39*	.14	.19*	.19*
2. Empathic concern		–	.29**	.12	.10
3. Identification with Jews (index)			–	.62**	.09
4. Closeness to Jews				–	.09
5. Closeness to Swedes					–

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Hypothesis 1: Changes in empathy and in social identification with Jews between the pre- and post-measurement.

The result of the within-group analysis showed that the students participating in the Holocaust education had a higher level of perspective taking (t (45) = −2.14; $p < .05$; 95% CIs [−1.51, −.05]; Cohen's $d = -.32$) and a higher identification with Jews as a group (t (45) = −5.19; $p < .05$; 95% CIs [−2.72, −1.20]; Cohen's $d = -.77$) at the post-measurement. No difference was found for empathic concern ($p = .73$) or for closeness to Swedes as a group ($p = .18$). These findings partly support our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Increase in perspective taking between the pre-and post-measurement and its relationship to closeness with Jews as a group.

The hierarchical regression analysis showed that the first block was significant (F (3,42) = 7.81; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .36$) and that a higher level of pre-measurement perspective taking predicted a higher value on the change variable ($\beta = .27$; $p < .05$). The opposite relationship was found for pre-measurement closeness to Jews ($\beta = -.48$; $p < .001$). Closeness to Swedes was not significantly related to the index variable ($\beta = .07$; $p = .60$). In the second block, the regression model was again significant (F (1,41) = 6.16; $p < .05$; $R^2 = .44$) and the same pattern emerged as in the first block concerning the pre-measurement variables. Supporting hypothesis 2, we found that a relative increase in perspective taking predicted a relative increase on closeness to Jews ($\beta = .33$; $p < .05$) and that this variable added 8.4% of explained variance compared to the first block.

Hypothesis 3: Post-measurement differences between Holocaust education group and control group.

The between-group comparison showed that the two groups differed significantly on perspective taking (t (141) = 2.45; $p < .05$; 95% CIs [−31, 2.93]; Cohen´s $d = .44$) and on identification with Jews as a group (t (141) = 3.28; $p < .01$; 95% CIs [.71, 2.87]; Cohen´s d = .59). No significant differences were found on either empathic concern ($p = .18$) or closeness to Swedes as a group ($p = .27$). As such, since the groups only differed in perspective taking and identification with Jews as a group, there was only partial support for our third hypothesis.

Discussion

In this study, we investigated how empathy and identification with Jews as a group were affected in a sample of high-school students taking part in a Holocaust educational trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. Based on the results from previous studies, we expected

that (1) the mean level of perspective taking, empathic concern and identification with Jews should increase in the Holocaust education group, (2) that an increase in perspective taking should predict an increase in a feeling of closeness to Jews as a group, and (3) that the Holocaust education group should have higher post-measurement mean values on these variables than the control group. Hypotheses one and three received partial support in that only perspective taking and identification with Jews significantly changed over time and were significantly higher compared to the control group. Hypothesis two received full support. As such, we replicate and extend the findings by Bilewicz and Wojcik.[40]

Since this is a field-study applying a quasi-experimental design, it is difficult to determine what it is exactly in the investigated education that led to these effects. Arguably, one possible explanation is that affect during the education plays an important role. Todd and Galinsky[41] show that perspective taking relates to affective mechanisms both through parallel (i.e. feeling as another) and reactive (i.e. feeling for another) empathy, which in turn increase the positive feelings towards another group. When the students were exposed to Jewish culture they would increase their probability of feeling as a Jew, while during their exposure to the horrors of Auschwitz-Birkenau they would increase their feeling for the Jews. This reasoning could also explain why an increase in closeness to Jews as a group was predicted by an increase in perspective taking. However, it should be noted that although we view closeness as an increased sense of 'we-ness' to Jews as a group, research also shows that closeness to an in-group depends on a variety of factors such as culture and type of closeness.[42] Another possible interpretation of our findings is that this form of Holocaust education provides the students with a normative context that positively influences their empathy and their identification with Jews. In research on prosocial behaviors, it has, for example, been shown that priming people with a religious belief system involving magnanimous ideals made them less hostile when threatened[43] and that priming people to help under a condition of mortality salience (i.e. being reminded of one's own mortality) led to more self-reported helping behaviors in hypothetical situations.[44] Such results suggest that it is the social frame that matters for a successful education. This has also been suggested in a Holocaust education context. Gensburger[45] conducted a study on visitors to a Holocaust exhibition in Paris in 2012 and found evidence indicating that the effect of the visit was less dependent upon the artefacts making up the exhibition than on the social frame in which they occurred. Based on other studies, an important part of a possible framing effect might be the students' personal expectations. In a study of Swedish eighth graders visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau, Flennegård and Mattsson[46] reasoned that during a preparation phase before the trip, the students anticipate that their self-image and view on human nature can alter when they visit the concentration and extermination camp. They also reasoned that these alterations are increased by the teachers creating a safe social environment where the students are allowed to react emotionally. The importance of the frame is also emphasized in evaluations of the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' project in Scotland. Cowan and Maitles[47] concluded, for example, that secondary school students sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau felt that the visit was meaningful, deeply emotionally moving, and resulted in a better understanding of human rights and genocide. However, Cowan and Maitles also concluded that those students who went to Poland unaccompanied by their regular teachers were sometimes strongly

emotionally affected by their experience and that it is necessary to determine the role educators on the site should have in handling such reactions. Looking at the responses to our open-ended question, it is beyond doubt that a trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau can elicit a range of negative affective reactions. Richardson[48] gives a similar account of the emotional experiences of teenagers visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of a Holocaust education program. Unhandled, such experiences can lead to psychological distress and PTSD.[49] However, in an educational context, there is a general agreement that if teaching about the Holocaust is intended to have a positive effect on students' attitudes, then a teacher needs to focus on the interplay between the content and emotional engagement.[50] In the words of Gregory,[51] this also means confronting the horrors of the Holocaust:

> to leave students unmoved by the Holocaust, to have exposed students to the Holocaust and for them not to have felt the misery and degradation of the victims of the Nazi ideological fantasies, is not to have done justice to the horrors constitutive to the Holocaust. Teaching about the Holocaust cannot be and must not be an intellectual exercise alone. The way to bring home the realities of the Holocaust is to confront students with its horrors and allow them a vision of a world bereft of moral concern. (p. 58)

Limitations

Some limitations should be noted. First, the statistical effects with regards to perspective taking are relatively moderate. Therefore, the results must be interpreted with caution. The extent to which this has to do with statistical power or with the structure of the actual education remains to be further investigated. Second, the students in the Holocaust education group volunteered to take part in the course (which is almost always the case). This might have introduced a self-selection bias where these students had higher levels of empathy and identification with Jews than the students in the control group before the trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau; they may also have had an increased inclination to respond to the questionnaire based on demand characteristics. Although the lack of pre-measurement data for the control groups makes it impossible to rule out this problem, we think that this risk is somewhat counteracted by the fact that there are significant increases on the investigated variables in the Holocaust education group. Third, the reliability of the perspective taking scale fluctuated, especially on the pre-measurement in the Holocaust education group, where it was acceptable but not good – a finding which could explain the lower effect size. However, lower reliability on that subscale seems to be a problem even outside our study. Viewing validation studies of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, even with larger samples the alpha coefficient of the perspective taking subscale is just above .70, suggesting that the homogeneity of the items is not perfect.[52] Therefore, since we found statistical effects on this subscale even with a lower reliability, we reason that this issue is of lesser importance in our case. Fourth, applied settings like the educational context addressed here often provide less scope for the researcher to set conditions. There will be more compromises, and restricted possibilities to design the ideal scientific study, not least with regard to separating potential causal factors from each other. As such we cannot detail what it was in the actual program that led to the found effects. For more precise conclusions to be drawn, we would have needed more control conditions where e.g. one group fulfilled the program, and another group only visited Auschwitz-Birkenau without undertaking the

program. Recent technological innovations such as VR-equipment[53] should offer extended possibilities for introducing multiple control conditions.

Applied perspective

From an applied perspective, our results suggest that Holocaust education that systematically exposes high-school students to Jewish culture and puts them 'in the shoes of the other' can lead to an increased perspective taking ability and a higher identification with Jews as a group. Speculatively, the results might suggest that working with perspective taking should be accompanied by techniques especially focusing on increasing the experience of closeness to members of an outgroup. Staub[54] argues, for example, that schools have an important task when it comes to teaching children about people's shared humanity. He states that students should learn about the implications of the fact that each social group has their own customs, beliefs and values, while, at the same time, learning that all humans are similar in desires, needs and emotions. Further, Staub argues that to counteract an 'us and them' mentality towards different cultural groups, education should focus on creating an ability in students to see a specific group from the inside, seeing their viewpoints as if they themselves were viewing scenarios from within that group and not from the outside. To get to this point it is therefore important that teachers explain how these groups developed over time as a result of specific conditions and choices made by their members (for an example of this relevant for the context of Holocaust education, see Reicher, Haslam, and Rath[55]). We also think that our results could be applied in human rights education. Although scholars argue that there is a qualitative difference between Holocaust education and human rights education in that the former focuses primarily on a genocide during a specific period in history while the latter is more focused on law and principles, (Mihr, "Why Holocaust Education is *Not Always* Human Rights Education") in agreement with Wogenstein, "Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education Reconsidered" we think that the content of the two types of education often overlaps considerably. The Holocaust was a gross violation of human rights and it is natural to expect that, reflected upon with due care and attention to learning objectives and each individual's distinctive learning needs, it can serve as a good tool for developing a human rights perspective.

Conclusions

We have shown that participating in Holocaust education can increase empathy and identification with Jews. Although more research is needed on the topic, our study contributes to filling a knowledge gap regarding prosocial effects of participating in Holocaust education. Potentially, the results may prove to be generalizable to education focusing on other related situations in the history of mankind where a social group has been persecuted and abused, though this should be tested and not assumed.

Notes

1. Gallant and Hartman, "Holocaust Education for the New Millennium."
2. Staub, "Building a Peaceful Society."

3. Stevick and Gross, "Holocaust Education in the 21st Century."
4. Pettitt, "Introduction: New Perspectives on Auschwitz."
5. Hale, "It Made Me Think."
6. Davis, "Empathy and Prosocial Behavior"; Nadler et al., "Defensive Helping."
7. Staub, "Building a Peaceful Society."
8. Andrighetto et al., "Reducing Competitive Victimhood in Kosovo."
9. Bilewicz et al., "How to Teach about the Holocaust."
10. Bussu et al., "The Perception of Visiting Holocaust Sites."
11. Hondius, "Learning from Eyewitnesses."
12. Batson et al., "Empathy and Altruism."
13. Davis, "Measuring Individual Differences in Empathy."
14. Harvey and Miles, "And Then They Came for Me."
15. Connor and Graham, "Using an Instructional Model of Historical Empathy."
16. Betts et al., "An Art Therapy Study of Visitor Reactions."
17. Jancsák et al., "The Impact of Video Testimonies in Holocaust."
18. Shechter and Salomon, "Does Vicarious Experience of Suffering."
19. Bornstein and Naveh, "From Empathy to Critical Reflection."
20. Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*.
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52. De Corte et al., "Measuring Empathic Tendencies: Reliability and Validity."
53. De Jong, "The Simulated Witness: Empathy and Embodiment in VR."
54. Staub, "Building a Peaceful Society."
55. Reicher et al., "Making a Virtue of Evil."

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Notes on contributors

Magnus Lindén is an associate professor at the Department of Psychology, Lund University. His research interests include moral transgressions in military conflicts, intergroup aggression, and leadership.

Fredrik Björklund is a professor at the Department of Psychology, Lund University. His research concerns moral psychology, stereotyping and personality assessment.

George Wilkes is a senior research fellow at the School of Security Studies in King´s College London. He is a specialist in the evaluation of social and attitudinal change and has extensive experience working with Holocaust Studies.

ORCID

Magnus Lindén http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0429-2624

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