

Measuring Holocaust knowledge and its impact: A Canadian case study

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Abstract This article examines the responses of some 1,500 Canadians to a public opinion survey on knowledge of the Holocaust, awareness of genocide, and attitudes towards discrimination and diversity. Based on one of the most detailed surveys conducted to date on Holocaust knowledge, the study found strong correlations between greater reported Holocaust knowledge and concern over genocide, as well as greater recognition of anti-Semitism as a societal problem. Greater reported Holocaust knowledge did not, however, correlate consistently with greater openness towards selected dimensions of diversity. This counterintuitive phenomenon can likely be attributed to what respondents have learned about diversity and the limits of the effect of Holocaust education in this regard. Hence, further research is required on the relationship between the two. Finally, going forward, a case is made for a global assessment of levels of Holocaust knowledge.

Keywords Holocaust education · Discrimination · Diversity

Introduction

Our information age provides extraordinary opportunities to expand and exchange knowledge. New technologies make it possible to transmit information to greater numbers of people across the globe. We can engage in dialogue across borders and boundaries in ways not imagined only a decade ago. Education over considerable distances is becoming increasingly common. When it comes to education about the Holocaust there is a concern that as time passes, there will be fewer witnesses to history who can carry the message forward. Yet, despite the growing distance in time since World War II, there is much optimism about the global degree of interest in acquiring knowledge about the Holocaust.

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Kushner (2002) has observed that “as we cross the threshold into a new millennium, interest in the Holocaust continues to escalate at an artistic and cultural level, representations of the Holocaust, especially in film and literature have never been so intense and pervasive” (p. 57). Bauer (2006) notes that “more and more people show an interest in this particular tragedy” which explains the “flood of fiction, theater, films, TV series, art, music, and of course historical, sociological, philosophical, psychological, and other academic research, a flood that has rarely if ever been equaled in dealing with any other historical event”.

Other observers seem less optimistic. Notwithstanding the increased interest in the Holocaust, the concern is that its lessons are being lost on too many people. Wiesel (2009) remarks that “if the civilized world allowed the crimes in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur to happen, it is because the lessons of Auschwitz and Treblinka have not been learned. And these lessons have not been learned quite simply because, for many reasons, the civilized world would rather not know”. Still, the observations made by Bauer and Wiesel are not contradictory. A growing interest in knowledge about the Holocaust may not result in people better understanding its contemporary lessons. The gap between knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust underscores the ongoing challenge facing educators in this field. One does not acquire knowledge about the Holocaust in a vacuum and how we comprehend its lessons is shaped by our broader learning experience.

Although opportunities to expand knowledge of the Holocaust may seem limitless, those engaged in disseminating such knowledge face important obstacles as they pursue their objective. It is no simple task to assess the degree of global knowledge about the murder of six million Jews and other victims during World War II. **The ability to reach larger numbers of people with information about the Holocaust does not mean that the intended message is conveyed effectively.** Ascertaining the level of knowledge and how it is interpreted are all the more necessary. Nonetheless, relatively few efforts have been made to measure such knowledge. To do so would require some consensus around a common set of questions to establish benchmarks to help determine what might be considered a satisfactory level of knowledge. Of the empirical studies conducted to date, observers have been surprised by just how many people report limited or no awareness of the Holocaust. Perhaps this is because leaders in the field of Holocaust education set the bar too high when it comes to the desired level of knowledge. “The World Must Know”, the title of a 1993 publication by Michael Berenbaum, former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, likely captures the objective of many persons who promote knowledge about the Holocaust. Given this goal, it might be expected that more effort would be directed at some empirically-based global assessment of knowledge about the Holocaust. To assess students’ knowledge of the past, establishing benchmarks is deemed increasingly important.

Educators and those setting education policies are interested in identifying the meaning(s) attributed to historic events and their contemporary lessons. Indeed, many educators believe the purpose of disseminating knowledge about the Holocaust is to convey specific lessons to the population about how to prevent its reoccurrence. Amongst reasons cited for teaching about the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website (2010) points to helping others develop “an understanding of the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, the infringement of civil rights, the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide”; it also hopes people will “develop an awareness of the value of pluralism and encourages acceptance of diversity in a pluralistic society”. To determine whether such ends are attained one would

need to establish the links between knowledge of the Holocaust and attitudes towards diversity, human rights and genocide.

In this article I attempt to establish how much awareness and knowledge Canadians estimate they have about the Holocaust, the principal ways they acquire such knowledge, and their desire to learn more about it. I then focus on the relationship between estimated Holocaust knowledge and attitudes towards genocide, anti-Semitism, and diversity. The findings are based on a national survey of 1,500 individuals conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies (2008) over three days in October of 2008. The first of its kind in Canada, the survey represents one of the most comprehensive national inquiries conducted on the issue. Several historic and contemporary factors contribute to unevenness in Holocaust knowledge across various parts of the world. Smith (2005) contends that a nation's proximity (in both time and geography) to the events of World War II may contribute to greater awareness of the Holocaust. I will examine this hypothesis.

Finally, the results of the survey are intended to encourage reflection on the impact that Holocaust knowledge can have on multicultural and citizenship education. This is especially important as Canadian multiculturalism is particularly "receptive to Holocaust education as a way to reduce discrimination and to encourage respect for cultural diversity" (Short and Reed 2001).

The global challenge of estimating Holocaust knowledge

As mentioned above, there have been relatively few large-scale quantitative studies of knowledge about the Holocaust and even fewer tests of how such knowledge correlates with views on genocide, diversity, multiculturalism, and other related matters. Undoubtedly, there are limits to the conclusions one can draw on the basis of public opinion surveys. Thus far, efforts to use public opinion surveys to shed light on knowledge about the Holocaust have encountered mixed success. Question formulation is crucial in social surveys. Given the complexity of the subject, when it comes to measuring knowledge about the Holocaust, the formulation of questions is all the more crucial. Serious problems may arise when questions are unclear, as evidenced by the interpretation of the results of a Holocaust-knowledge study that Burns Roper conducted in 1993 for the American Jewish Committee (AJC). According to Golub and Cohen (1993), the AJC survey results suggested that more than one in five Americans believed it possible that the Holocaust had never happened. This alarming finding gave rise to much debate over the survey method that was employed to arrive at this conclusion. Further examination revealed that the survey question was constructed with a confusing double negative (Moore and Newport 1994). The question read as follows: "Does it seem possible or does it seem impossible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened?" Using a simplified version of the question, Moore and Newport (1994) found that fewer than 10% of the American population appeared to doubt that the Holocaust had occurred. In an analysis of the controversy, Bischooping (1998) noted that several survey researchers deliberating on the topic of measuring Holocaust knowledge concurred that better survey questions could produce more consistent estimates of public ignorance on this important matter.

In 2005 the AJC commissioned a survey on the topic of Holocaust knowledge, which was conducted in seven countries: Austria, France, Germany, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Analyzing the findings, Tom Smith (2005) observed that knowledge of the Holocaust was limited and uneven across the countries surveyed.

Nonetheless, the survey revealed strong support across the countries for transmitting knowledge of the Holocaust to future generations. Smith assumed that since people tend to learn more about their national histories, Holocaust knowledge would be greater in countries that were most directly involved in World War II. Thus he expected that Germans and Austrians would know more about the Holocaust than Poles who, in turn, would know more than people in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The survey, however, did not support this assumption. Instead, it revealed that knowledge about the Holocaust was greatest in Sweden, followed by France, Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, Poland, and the United States. Smith was surprised by the substantial degree of Holocaust knowledge in Sweden and the lower level of knowledge amongst Germans and Poles given their historical proximity to the events in question.

The 2005 AJC survey asked whether respondents had heard of Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka and whether they knew how many Jews were killed during World War II. On the first question, the ability to identify these places as concentration camps or some related facility (such as death camps or extermination camps), the responses ranged from 91% in Sweden to just 44% in the United States; in Austria it was 88%, in Poland 79%, in France 78%, in Germany 77%, and in the UK 53%. The percentage indicating they did not know ranged from 46% in the United States to 5% in Sweden. Another question asked, "Approximately how many Jews in all of Europe were killed by the Nazis during the Second World War?" It generated the correct response from some 55% of respondents in Sweden and 30% of those in Poland, along with 49% in France and Germany, 41% in Austria, 39% in the UK and 33% in the US.

The other set of questions focused on the commitment to preserve and transmit knowledge about the Holocaust. In this regard, those agreeing that it is essential or very important for all people to know about the Holocaust ranged from 89% in Austria to 70% in Poland. Respondents were asked whether it was time to put the Nazi extermination of the Jews "behind us" or to keep remembrance strong. The percentages who felt it was important to keep the memory strong ranged from 92% in Sweden to 70% in Austria. At this point, it is worth noting the significant gap amongst Austrians: a sizeable percentage (89%) said it was either essential or very important to have knowledge of the Holocaust. Yet, paradoxically, an important minority (27%) agreed that it was time to put the Holocaust behind us. Another question asked whether teaching about the Holocaust should be required in schools; responses ranged from 92% of Austrians to 69% of Poles, along with 91% in Sweden, 86% in France, 80% in the US, 79% in Germany, and 76% in the UK.

A large-scale survey of teachers in Sweden conducted for the Living History Forum (Lange 2008) aimed to assess their knowledge about the Holocaust; the questions formulated for the survey were deemed adequate by a group of professional historians. For example, one question put to the teachers was "Which of the following camps were built primarily in order to murder Jews?" Seven possible responses were provided, of which six are related to places and one is an institution. Two of the names, Chelmno and Treblinka, were correct answers: places where the Nazis built camps whose principal objective was to murder Jews. Some 88% of the participating teachers answered correctly in relation to "Treblinka", 0.9% answered incorrectly and 8.2% answered "Don't know". Nearly 17% answered correctly in relation to "Chelmno", 7% answered incorrectly and 76.2% answered "Don't know". Almost three out of four teachers answered incorrectly in relation to the names Dachau and Bergen-Belsen. These were concentration camps, but the vast majority of teachers were unaware that they were not built with the primary objective of murdering Jews.

The report's author, Anders Lange, contends that "knowledge about the objectives associated with the Nazi's establishment of different concentration camps should constitute a part of the desirable intentional depth in teachers' awareness and understanding of German Nazism as a phenomenon and the Second World War as an historical period" (Lange 2008, p. 92). He regards the teachers as having a low level of knowledge about the Holocaust, based on the questions contained in the survey. He reported that slightly over 70% of the teachers gave the wrong answer to at least eight of the eleven knowledge questions included in the questionnaire. Only two out of just over 5,000 teachers surveyed answered all of the knowledge questions correctly, and a further fourteen gave the correct answer to all but one. Yet in the absence of another survey where the same questions have been posed to teachers or to a random sample of the whole population, it remains difficult to situate the results in a broader context.

For their part, many of the teachers felt that the questions were much too difficult and focused too much on "details". This criticism should not be dismissed, even though certain professional historians regarded the questions as valid. Indeed Lange suggests that the survey seeks to establish whether teachers possess the "desired intentional depth" when it comes to knowledge about the Holocaust. It is important to determine what the desired level of depth is about knowledge of the Holocaust.

The criteria established in the AJC and LHF surveys are highly relevant for Holocaust educators in the effort to establish some benchmark for satisfactory knowledge in this area. Contrasting the ways the two surveys approached the question of knowledge of death/concentration camps, the AJC found that knowledge amongst the Swedish public surveyed was very high based on their ability to identify Treblinka, Dachau, and Auschwitz as such. On the other hand, the LHF study concluded that the Swedish teachers have low knowledge of the Holocaust, partly because they were not aware that murdering Jews was not the primary objective at Dachau and Bergen-Belsen. Undoubtedly, the LHF survey raises the knowledge bar considerably higher than the AJC survey did.

When it comes to knowledge of the Holocaust, the two surveys reveal strong support for transmitting such knowledge amongst the teachers as well as amongst the broader population. In the case of the LHF survey, the purportedly lower knowledge of the Holocaust does not undercut the commitment to its transmission. Overall some 80% of the respondents to the AJC survey declared it essential or very important for "all people in your country to know about and understand the Nazi extermination of the Jews during the Second World War". Tom Smith described this result as reflecting the view of a strong majority. Still, depending on one's expectation, one could counter that one respondent in five did not share this view.

The AJC and LHF surveys raise important questions about the gap between knowledge of the Holocaust (as defined by the survey criteria) and the commitment to preserving its memory. The AJC survey results suggest that those with stronger knowledge of the Holocaust are more supportive of the need for transmission. In part, this is likely attributable to the fact that those who are least aware are less capable of properly transmitting the knowledge.

Looking at the AJC survey, however, two things need to be borne in mind. First, when it comes to testing the transmission of Holocaust knowledge, the questions employed in the survey assumed that a preamble would lay out the objective of the Holocaust. Hence it is necessary to provide respondents with some context to better equip them to answer questions. The second point relates to Smith's link between national proximity to the Holocaust and knowledge about it. Under certain circumstances, proximity to tragic events may result in a group wanting to create distance when such knowledge undercuts its

collective sense of pride and belonging. In other words, a given collectivity's knowledge and understanding of the past may be affected by its capacity to come to terms with painful historic memories.

Canadians' assessment of knowledge of the Holocaust

To test the self-estimated knowledge of Canadians about the Holocaust, the ACS-Leger survey put two questions to respondents. First, respondents were asked how often they had heard about the Holocaust and if so, with what frequency. Second, they were asked to assess the strength of their knowledge of the Holocaust. The challenge in employing questions that invite respondents to estimate their own knowledge is the relative character of what each individual regards as strong knowledge. Despite the need for caution in this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the survey's main objective was to look at how individuals who believe they have a stronger or weaker knowledge of the Holocaust respond to various issues that are relevant to its transmission. In this regard, a key question is whether the better-informed respondents better understand the contemporary lessons that Holocaust education strives to transmit.

According to the ACS-Leger survey, some 82% of respondents reported that they had heard about the Holocaust either often (52%) or sometimes (31%), while 17% reported that they either rarely (10%) or never (7%) heard about it. As Table 1 shows, the older segment of the population was more likely to report having "often" heard about the Holocaust. Those in the youngest cohort, aged 18–24, were most likely to acknowledge "never" having heard about it.

As to the strength of their knowledge of the Holocaust, some 65% of respondents agreed that they had good knowledge. Age was not a significant factor in Canadians' self-evaluation of this knowledge. Amongst Canadians, the gaps in self-estimated knowledge were most pronounced on the basis of one's first language and level of education. In terms of educational attainment, some 52% of those with a high school diploma or less reported a good knowledge compared to 68% with a college degree and 74% with a university degree. In terms of language, some 49% of the Francophone population agreed they possessed a good knowledge compared with 71% of Anglophones; the percentage was 66% amongst those Canadians whose first language was neither English nor French.

Table 2 below shows the correlation between how much people reported having heard about the Holocaust and their estimated degree of knowledge. Not surprisingly, the more

Table 1 Extent to which Canadians have heard about the Holocaust, by age group

Age	Heard about the Holocaust?				
	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)	Don't know/refused (%)
18–24	42.1	37.6	7.3	12.9	–
25–34	44.5	32.2	13.5	7.8	2.0
35–44	48.5	32.4	14.0	4.4	0.7
45–54	53.5	30.7	8.6	6.9	0.3
55–64	58.9	26.8	8.5	4.5	1.3
65 and over	59.6	25.1	9.4	5.1	0.8

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

Table 2 Extent to which Canadians have heard about the Holocaust and agree they have good knowledge of it

I have a good knowledge of the Holocaust	Heard about the Holocaust?		
	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)
Strongly agree	30.7	10.0	14.8
Somewhat agree	50.9	45.8	27.1
Somewhat disagree	12.8	27.1	24.5
Strongly disagree	4.4	12.6	21.9
Don't know/Refused	1.3	4.6	11.6

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

often someone reported hearing about the Holocaust, the more likely they were to have estimated a strong knowledge of it.

Going to the sources: Where Canadians secured information about the Holocaust

People acquire knowledge about the Holocaust from a variety of sources. Moreover, the pattern of knowledge acquisition is often interconnected with having read a book about the Holocaust, or seen a film on it. Some 56% of respondents said they had seen a film about the Holocaust, 51% had read a newspaper article about it, 36% had read a book about it and 13% had seen a museum exhibit. Some 39% reported learning about the Holocaust through a course in school; amongst the 18–24 cohort that figure rises to 60%. Of those affirming a good knowledge of the Holocaust, some 54% said they had often read newspaper stories about it, 42% had often seen a film on it, 41% had learned about it through a course in school, and 31% had often read a book on it.

Some 55% of Canadians surveyed agree that they would like to learn more about the Holocaust. The desire to learn more correlates with age: 72% of the youngest cohort (18–24) expressed further interest in doing so. Such interest also correlates with self-estimated knowledge: 60% of those saying they possess a good knowledge indicated a desire to learn more, while only 34% of those estimating low knowledge expressed such a desire.

Table 3 shows the percentage who indicate they had learned about the Holocaust through a course in school and their level of interest in learning more about it. It reveals that those who said they often or sometimes learned about it in school are more likely to want to learn more, in contrast with those who have never learned about it, who are least likely to want to learn more.

These results support the views of the LHF survey which revealed that 92% of teachers reported that their students are quite (52%) or very (42%) interested in the topic of the Holocaust. Similarly, the Swedish study reveals that almost four out of five teachers have not observed any fatigue among their students in relation to the Holocaust as a topic. Nearly all of the teachers who said they had noticed such fatigue stated that it occurred “only to some extent”. Another study, one commissioned by the government of Scotland, also demonstrated that primary-level students react positively to learning about the Holocaust. Maitles, Cowan and Butler (2006) found that introducing the Holocaust to youth does not lead to any meaningful degree of boredom due to overexposure to the

Table 3 Frequency with which Canadians learned about the Holocaust through a course in school and extent of their interest in learning more about it

I would like to learn more about the Holocaust	Learned about the Holocaust through a course in school?			
	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Strongly agree	23.3	15.3	18.9	12.8
Somewhat agree	42.5	52.0	40.6	28.6
Somewhat disagree	20.1	19.0	25.9	27.9
Strongly disagree	7.3	9.4	9.4	21.2
Don't know/refused	6.8	4.3	5.2	9.5

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

Holocaust. Paradoxically, the survey of Canadians revealed that it was the group estimating the lowest degree of knowledge of the Holocaust that agreed there is too much talk about the subject. In sum, an important challenge for educators is to reach those who know the least about the Holocaust and are most reluctant to learn about it.

If, however, those who have often learned about the Holocaust in school are more likely to want to learn more, those who acquire the information from other sources seem somewhat more interested in additional learning. This finding can be partly attributed to the age and educational level of those who more often read books or see films on the subject. Moreover, those who have often learned about the Holocaust in school are the most likely to have acquired information from other sources. Still, these results highlight the importance of a multifaceted approach to transmitting such knowledge, and they point to areas that have a strong impact on knowledge retention—a matter that requires further research. As Table 4 shows, those who are most likely to want to learn more about the subject have visited a museum exhibit about the Holocaust, or read a book or seen a film on it.

How does knowledge of the Holocaust translate into commitment to preserve its memory? According to the ACS-Leger survey, some 45% of Canadians expressed interest

Table 4 Extent to which Canadians agree they would like to learn more about the Holocaust and most frequently mentioned sources of knowledge on it

I would like to learn more about the Holocaust	I have often...				
	Read a book about the Holocaust (%)	Learned about the Holocaust through a course in school (%)	Read an article in the newspaper about the Holocaust (%)	Seen a film about the Holocaust (%)	Visited a museum exhibit about the Holocaust (%)
Strongly agree	40.0	23.3	29.2	36.9	55.3
Somewhat agree	35.6	42.5	34.6	37.4	28.9
Somewhat disagree	15.6	20.1	24.2	15.4	13.2
Strongly disagree	3.0	7.3	6.7	4.1	0
Don't know/refused	5.9	6.8	5.4	6.2	2.6

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

Table 5 Extent to which Canadians say they have a good knowledge of the Holocaust, believe Holocaust learning in school should be compulsory, and are interested in participating in a remembrance ceremony

Agree	I have a good knowledge of the Holocaust			
	Strongly agree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Learning about the Holocaust should be compulsory in our schools	91	81.8	75.7	43.5
I would be interested in participating in a ceremony remembering the victims	61.5	51.5	34.1	24.6

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

in participating in a ceremony remembering the victims of the Holocaust. As Table 5 shows, the majority who say they have a good knowledge of the Holocaust would be inclined to take part in a ceremony remembering its victims; those who self-estimate less knowledge would be least inclined to do so. Some 75% of Canadians agree that learning about the Holocaust should be compulsory in school. As shown in the table, those who self-estimated strong knowledge were most likely to agree that this learning should be compulsory; nearly all agreed.

Holocaust knowledge, genocide awareness, and action

Wiesel (2009) and Bauer (2006) have expressed similar concerns: the fact that genocide continues to occur around the world suggests that too many people have yet to understand the lessons of the Holocaust. That these concerns are expressed so frequently may raise questions about the causal link between possessing knowledge about the Holocaust and understanding its contemporary lessons. A set of questions included in the ACS-Leger survey probes respondents' awareness of genocide and the desire to take action to prevent it. Responses to these questions were correlated with self-estimated knowledge of the Holocaust to examine the relationship between them. More Canadians report having often heard about the Holocaust (52%) than about genocide that is occurring currently in the world (36%). As observed below, those respondents saying they often heard about the Holocaust were far more likely to report having heard about genocide taking place, compared to those who had heard about the Holocaust less often (Table 6).

The survey of Canadians suggests that those who are most knowledgeable about the Holocaust tend to be the most concerned over genocide. However, the reverse is not necessarily true since the respondents who identify genocide as an important global problem and who desire action to prevent it, are not necessarily those who know the most about the Holocaust. On the other hand, among those who said they know the least about the Holocaust, a substantial percentage responded "don't know" (see Table 7, percentages in parentheses) when asked how concerned they were about genocide and how much they desired preventive action.

Table 8 shows the relationship between the extent to which respondents report having learned about the Holocaust in school and their degree of concern around genocide. These results confirm the belief that those who have acquired knowledge through a course in school are more likely to be concerned about contemporary genocide. Those who reported often learning about the Holocaust through a course in school were also more likely to

Table 6 Extent to which Canadians have heard about the Holocaust and about a genocide taking place elsewhere

Heard about a genocide taking place in the world today?	Heard about the Holocaust?			
	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Often	53.4	21.8	16.7	5.1
Sometimes	36.1	48.2	30.8	22.4
Rarely	6.3	17.1	26.3	12.2
Never	3.1	12.5	23.1	59.2
Don't know/refused	1.2	.4	3.2	1.0

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

Table 7 Extent to which Canadians agree they have a good knowledge of the Holocaust and agree on selected questions on genocide

Agree	I have a good knowledge of the Holocaust			
	Strongly agree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Strongly disagree
Agree that I am very concerned about genocide occurring in the world	93.2	91.2	78.5	49.0% (38)
Agree that genocide is an important problem in the world today	93.2	91.5	82.9	56.0% (29)
Disagree that we can't do much to prevent genocide from occurring today	70.1	72.3	69.2	43.9% (29)
Agree that we should send Canadian troops to areas where genocide is occurring	72.6	70.7	61.3	37.5% (26)

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

Table 8 Extent to which Canadians have learned about the Holocaust through a course in school and are concerned about genocide occurring

I am very concerned about genocide occurring in the world	Learned about the Holocaust through a course in school?			
	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Strongly agree	60.5	48.9	47.0	41.7
Somewhat agree	30.9	39.3	36.6	31.3
Somewhat disagree	4.5	4.0	7.7	8.4
Strongly disagree	.9	4.0	.7	6.4
Don't know/refused	3.2	3.7	8.0	12.2

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

agree that we should send Canadian troops to areas where genocide is occurring (72%), as compared to those who had not learned about it in school (55%). Further, those who often learned about the Holocaust in school are more likely to disagree (76%) with the view that “we can't do much to prevent genocide from occurring today”. Still, it is encouraging to

note that the majority of persons who did not learn about the Holocaust in school also disagree (55%) with the statement that little can be done to prevent genocide.

Holocaust knowledge and openness to diversity

Salmons (2003) suggests that teaching the lessons of the Holocaust might inspire youth to work harder towards a fairer, more tolerant society that sees strength in diversity, values multiculturalism, and combats racism. He points out that in the United Kingdom, education about the Holocaust is clearly linked with the objectives of intercultural education and preparing students to participate in a multicultural society. Maitles et al. (2006), drawing on research done with Scottish secondary students, offer evidence that Holocaust education can make an important contribution to human rights awareness and foster appreciation of the harmful effects of stereotyping and scapegoating. Nonetheless, they note that while Holocaust education did influence primary and secondary school children in this regard, it cannot eradicate all racist attitudes. Landau (1989, cited in Maitles et al. 2006) asserts that Holocaust teaching “perhaps more effectively than any other subject, has the power to sensitize pupils to the dangers of indifference, intolerance and racism”. Seppinwall (1999) suggests that a major purpose in teaching young children about the Holocaust is to have them learn “the importance of tolerance and respect for others who are different”, along with “living together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and appreciation for the contribution of others” (p. 38).

The AJC study (Smith 2005) established a link between education about the Holocaust and sympathy towards Jews but did not extend that inquiry to other groups. The LHF survey of teachers found that, whether or not they had taught about the Holocaust themselves, the majority believed that such teaching increased students’ understanding of the occurrence of genocide as well as hate crimes, racism, and neo-Nazism. A good deal of the work in this area is based on the perception that Holocaust education is effective in promoting genocide awareness (as the evidence for Canada also confirms) and combating hate. However, little research has focused on causal links between students learning about the Holocaust and possible longer-term effects on attitudes towards discrimination.

Other than issues of racism and discrimination, rarely have there been tests of the impact that Holocaust education has on views around openness to immigration and valuing multicultural diversity. The relationship between knowledge of the Holocaust and multiculturalism is complex, given global debates about the best practices in addressing the needs of diverse cultures. Still, if meaningful connections are to be made between Holocaust education and intercultural or multicultural education, presumably it would be useful to examine that relationship. The ACS-Leger survey provided correlations between self-estimated knowledge of the Holocaust and the extent to which respondents see anti-Semitism as a societal problem. It offers another set of correlations for self-estimated knowledge of the Holocaust and views on various dimensions of diversity. To choose the statements on diversity around which to elicit opinions, the ACS-Leger team identified the questions most frequently asked by leading polling firms in Canada to gauge the population’s views in this regard. It is important to keep in mind that the ACS-Leger survey was not focused on learning outcomes from Holocaust education and therefore cannot be compared with studies like the one in Scotland described by Maitles et al. (2006). However, the survey of Canadians does attempt to shed light on the assumption that Holocaust knowledge leads to greater openness to diversity.

Table 9 Canadians' responses to selected question on anti-Semitism and diversity, by levels of knowledge of the Holocaust

% Agree	I have a good knowledge of the Holocaust			
	Strongly agree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Strongly disagree
Anti-Semitism is a problem in our society	70.3	63.5	53.5	38.0 (38)
Society has been strengthened by the diversity of cultural and religious groups	83.9	77.6	74.4	65 (11)
Society should try harder to accept the customs and traditions of minority religious groups	68.7	60.8	56.0	53 (15)
Society is threatened by the influx of non-christian immigrants	26.6	33.6	31.1	34.3 (18)
Immigrants should give up their customs and traditions and become more like the majority	38.4	40.0	39.8	40.7 (12)

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

The ACS-Leger survey reveals that some 58% of Canadians regard anti-Semitism as a societal problem (17% strongly agree and 41% somewhat agree). Short and Reed (2004) suggest that the main purpose of Holocaust education is to inoculate the population against anti-Semitic and racist propaganda. The ACS-Leger survey does provide evidence that those with higher self-estimated Holocaust knowledge are more inclined to view anti-Semitism as a societal problem. In effect, it is safe to conclude that those reporting greater Holocaust knowledge are more concerned about anti-Semitism. Though the respondents who say they know least about the Holocaust are less likely to believe that anti-Semitism is a societal problem (38%, see Table 9), an equal proportion of that group (38%) indicate that they do not know.

The importance of Holocaust knowledge as a causal factor in favourable views of diversity is borne out to some degree by the results of the survey. But the gap between those who are most and least knowledgeable about the Holocaust is not as wide as might be assumed. Some 84% of those estimating strong Holocaust knowledge agree that society has been strengthened by the diversity of cultural and religious groups, as compared with 75% of those who report low Holocaust knowledge. There is also a 12-point gap on the question of whether society should try harder to accept the customs and traditions of minority religious groups. Nearly 70% of those describing themselves as most knowledgeable support greater acceptance, compared to 56% of those who regard their knowledge as somewhat weaker. Those self-estimating strong Holocaust knowledge were just as likely (38%) as others across the spectrum of reported knowledge to agree that immigrants should give up their customs and traditions and become more like the majority. Hence Holocaust knowledge did not appear to have an appreciable bearing on responses to that question, and no causal link could be established around this relationship. On the issue of whether society is threatened by the influx of non-Christian immigrants, those estimating strong Holocaust knowledge were somewhat less likely to agree than were other respondents. Clearly, strong Holocaust knowledge may correlate with greater acceptance and less fear of "others", but amongst those who self-estimate strong knowledge, a not insignificant minority still feel threatened by the presence of minority religious groups.

While the degree of Holocaust knowledge may not always result in substantial gaps in people's views on diversity, those Canadians aged 18–24 who report often learning about the Holocaust in school appear least likely to agree that non-Christian immigrants are a societal threat and to agree that immigrants should give up their customs and traditions and

Table 10 Extent to which Canadians aged 18–24 have learned about the Holocaust through a course in school and their responses to selected questions on diversity

% who agree with these statements	Learned about the Holocaust through a course in school			
	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Society is threatened by the influx of non-christian immigrants	15.0	34.8	25.8	21.0
Society has been strengthened by the diversity of cultural and religious groups	70.0	91.3	51.3	54.8
Immigrants should give up their customs and traditions and become more like the majority	11.9	26.1	27.7	22.6
Society should try harder to accept the customs and traditions of minority religious groups	75.0	74.5	54.0	65.6

Source: ACS-Leger (2008)

become more like the majority (see Table 10). Proponents of multiculturalism will likely be encouraged by such results. However, the weaker causal links between Holocaust knowledge generally and attitudes towards diversity suggest a need for further research around the relationship.

Educators cannot be expected to offer easy answers on matters of immigration and integration that are frequently being discussed within and outside the classroom. As mentioned at the outset, the lessons drawn from learning about the Holocaust cannot be understood in a vacuum. Youth are exposed to a broad range of ideas from various sources that undoubtedly modify the impact of specific classes about the Holocaust. In effect, the lessons acquired through such learning may not offer clear guidance in those matters pertaining to diversity that are the object of ongoing debate. It is vital to look at Holocaust education in conjunction with the student's broader learning experience.

Conclusions: Benchmarking Holocaust knowledge

Establishing the national level of knowledge about the Holocaust can be a formidable task. Creating a survey to measure such a sensitive topic requires that questions be carefully formulated. As Totten (1999) has remarked, "the Holocaust is one of the most tortuously complex, not to mention horrific subjects an educator can tackle" (p. 1). Strong conclusions depend to a great extent upon how the questions are put. As we observed, failed experiments in the use of public opinion surveys to estimate knowledge about the Holocaust were related to the way the questions were formulated. Undoubtedly, efforts to promote knowledge in various countries are affected by how the Holocaust influences a country's national self-image and whether there are contemporary political challenges associated with revisiting what often represents a difficult part of the past. Such conditions may also result in diverging levels of commitment to offering Holocaust education and varying strategies for promoting Holocaust knowledge. In short, a nation's proximity to World War II does not always result in greater knowledge about the Holocaust. Given this situation, it may be difficult to get agreement across various questions testing knowledge of the Holocaust. But benchmarking such knowledge remains vital if a determination is to be made of where knowledge gaps persist and how and what lessons are to be drawn. While

opinion surveys on the Holocaust may have their limits, they provide one of the few means to develop baseline information and then to point to future avenues for the much needed quantitative and qualitative research in this area.

Following Smith's (2005) logic, Canada should be regarded as a country without strong proximity to the events of the Holocaust; in consequence, Canadians' knowledge about it might be relatively low. On the other hand, in the post-war period Canada became the home to a relatively important number of Holocaust survivors and hence the broader Jewish community to which they belong is committed to widely transmitting knowledge about the Holocaust. If proximity to the tragedy is to be a criterion underlying some anticipated level of knowledge, then presumably the bar need not be set as high when it comes to Canadians' knowledge about the Holocaust. Therefore, the fact that just over 90% of Canadians surveyed are aware of the Holocaust may be a source of comfort to those who regard such knowledge as essential. Then again, establishing the percentage who are aware may be a helpful starting point, but it does not provide the basis for the detailed benchmarking that would require delving into the depth of such knowledge. Ideally, surveys of public opinion around knowledge of the Holocaust should give rise to debate around the minimal criteria to be considered adequately "informed" on the subject. Holocaust educators regularly test students' knowledge of the subject and a comparative analysis of the content of tests would be valuable. The ACS-Leger survey, which is the basis of much of the discussion above, examines the degree to which the Canadian population has heard about and knows about the Holocaust. Undoubtedly, there are some limits in relying on self-assessed knowledge, especially how accurately it reflects awareness of the specific events that occurred during the Holocaust. On the other hand, an exclusive focus on knowledge of facts and figures may not provide a broader comprehension of the Holocaust and the lessons to which it gives rise. Ideally, cross-national comparisons of Holocaust knowledge will want to consider self-assessed knowledge as well as the specifics.

As one of the world's more demographically multicultural countries, Canada often boasts about its commitment to cultural diversity. A survey of Canadians can offer Holocaust educators potentially important insights into whether openness towards diversity is enhanced by knowledge of the subject. In turn, this can help evaluate whether the desired lessons are learned from education about the Holocaust. The above analysis explores the degree to which Canadians have heard about the Holocaust, their estimated knowledge of it, and their responses to genocide and anti-Semitism as well as diversity. The survey results suggest those reporting strong knowledge of the Holocaust are more likely to describe contemporary anti-Semitism as a problem, and somewhat more likely to be concerned over genocide, but somewhat more divided in their views on certain aspects of diversity. That knowledge of the Holocaust appears to have less bearing on opinion with respect to some questions around societal diversity may have less to do with the impact of Holocaust education than the ways that people learn about and understand issues of diversity. That question merits further inquiry, particularly where connections are made between Holocaust, multicultural and citizenship education.

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