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Challenging discrimination: does holocaust education in the primary years have an effect on pupils' citizenship values in their first year of secondary schooling?

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Racism and anti-Semitism in Europe today

In the 21st century, the Holocaust continues to evoke the ultimate in barbarism and inhumanity. The lessons of the Holocaust are especially relevant because of world atrocities, such as Darfur, the increase in attacks on Jewish communities and the rise of the far right in Europe (Bergmann and Wetzel, 2003; *Evening News*, 2004a; Community Security Trust, 2005).

Recent racist incidents include the painting of swastikas in Edinburgh in April 2004 (*Evening News*, 2004b) and the abduction, torture and murder of the Glasgow schoolboy Kriss Donald in March, 2004, which was proven to be linked to racism between Scottish white and Asian youths, show that extreme forms of racism persist in the newly devolved Scotland. Statistics showing more than 260 people in Scotland have been charged for crimes aggravated by religious hatred within a ten month period highlight the extent of religious bigotry in Scotland (MacLeod, 2004). Further, a report commissioned by Glasgow City Council (*Herald*, 2004) suggests a worrying increase in both verbal and physical racist incidents reported in schools; even more worryingly, the most prevalent age group of the perpetrators was 9-12. In addition, there is evidence that even in a primary school with a strong track record of effective 'antiracist policies, strategies and practice', racism is experienced by pupils from an ethnic minority (Wolfson *et al*, 2004).

The Holocaust in the Scottish curriculum

While the Holocaust has been taught in Scottish primary and secondary schools for many years (Maitles and Cowan, 1999 and 2004; Cowan and Maitles, 2000), the announcement of the UK Holocaust Memorial Day was accompanied by the Home Office and the Scottish Executive commissioning curricular materials for teaching Holocaust history to primary pupils aged 10-11 years and secondary pupils, (DfEE, 2000; LTS, 2000). This has been continued (LTS, 2002a, Morley and Nunn, 2005). These resources make links with contemporary manifestations of racism, prejudice and discrimination.

The content of the above curricular resources share a strong focus on the areas of knowledge and understanding relevant to the development of active and responsible citizenship. Currently a national priority, 'Values and Citizenship' involves teaching pupils 'duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society' and 'respect for self and one another' (Standards in Scotland's Schools Act, 2000). Further, the Education for Citizenship proposals (LTS, 2000b) implemented in 2003, have added impetus to the development of teaching about the Holocaust in schools. However, unlike England, where Holocaust education is included in the curriculum for 13-14 year olds, in Scotland it is optional to teach the Holocaust.

Previous research in secondary schools ((Short and Carrington, 1991; Carrington and Short, 1997; Brown and Davies, 1998; Short et al 1998; Maitles and Cowan, 1999;

Davies, 2000; Hector, 2000; Totten, 2000; Cowan and Maitles, 2002; Ben-Peretz, 2003; Schweber, 2003) provides evidence that Holocaust education can make a significant contribution to citizenship in developing pupils' citizenship awareness.

Short asserts that one of the lessons that the Holocaust teaches pupils is that pupil attitudes are, 'to some extent, culturally determined' and that its teaching should encourage pupils to examine whether any harmful stereotypes may emanate from an aspect of their culture. (Short, 2003). This is supported by Lord Lamont's claim that devolution has led to 'a marked rise in anti-English racism' (*The Sunday Times* 2005). While his solution is anti-racism legislation that protects English people who are racially abused in Scotland, the contribution of Holocaust education may also be considered.

Hence, as a result of curricular developments, governmental support and research into its teaching, Scottish teachers of the upper primary and lower secondary stages now have more opportunities to teach the Holocaust and greater accessibility to Holocaust teaching resources than before.

Research methodology

To investigate the value of Holocaust education, the authors devised a longitudinal strategy which examines whether there are 'immediate' and 'lasting' effects on the attitudes and dispositions of pupils that result from its teaching; further, the values of this cohort will be compared to those of their peers who did not have the opportunity to study the Holocaust in primary school. This will provide empirical evidence of the contribution of Holocaust education in developing attitudes relating to citizenship.

We examined the attitudes of a total of 99 Primary 7 pupils, (aged 11-12 years) from two primary schools before and after they studied the Holocaust (Maitles and Cowan, 2004). We further had the funding from SEED (Scottish Executive Education Department) to follow these pupils into the secondary school, where we were able to 'test' their attitudes compared to both their previous responses and to their Secondary 1 (aged 12-13 years) peer group from primaries where the Holocaust was not studied (approximately 140 pupils). This stage of the longitudinal study has the potential of suggesting whether there is a lasting impact of this type of learning. Problems with this kind of panel/cohort study, as outlined by (amongst many others) Mason and Bramble, 1978; Cohen and Manion, 1989; Gall et al, 1996; Ruddock and McIntyre, 1998; Gay and Airasian, 2000 include other possible factors that may determine pupil responses.

The surveys were given to the pupils in November 2003, March 2004 and December 2004 which is, in longitudinal terms, a brief timescale and should alleviate some of the worries of longitudinal research, albeit yield a less long term result. Distribution of surveys before Holocaust Memorial Day 2005 meant that the impact of the media leading up to this commemorative day did not influence the pupils' responses. The administering of the surveys by the research assistant resulted in the class teachers having little opportunity to influence their pupils. Both primary Head Teachers gave feedback to the content of the draft survey, contributing to its final form and ensuring pupils' understanding of the questions. The survey had two parts: evaluation of whether pupils thought that their understanding of some general concepts had improved; and pupils' values and attitudes.

In order to avoid aspects of familiarity, to move beyond the multicultural areas most often used in the studies on this area and to explore issues such as attitudes towards Gypsy

Travellers[1], we chose a small rural local authority some 30 miles from Glasgow. The sample was chosen in collaboration with the local authority who identified two primary schools in the area that taught the Holocaust in Primary 7. Teachers were given free choice in the way they taught the Holocaust as researchers wanted them to teach the Holocaust as they would usually and did not wish to impose anything on them. A further advantage was that all these pupils went to the same local secondary. Both these primaries are non-denominational, have mixed socio-economic catchment areas and are predominantly white.

We summarised the results of the first stage of our findings (Maitles and Cowan, 2004) as:

> It is important not to take too much from the first stage of this study. There is evidence that pupils' knowledge and values/attitudes improved (excepting pupils' attitudes towards English people) after their learning about the Holocaust. At the very least, numbers of pupils who put 'don't know' for survey 1 came off the fence in survey 2 and came down in favour of tolerance and understanding. Yet, surprisingly few (only 28.3% overall) knew (or thought they knew) what anti-Semitism was. Analysis of the ways in which teachers in our schools put the Holocaust in the citizenship context is likely to contribute to an understanding of this. For example, did teachers teach the Holocaust as a specific topic linked to genocide or as an example of racism per se? In terms of our general aims, the first stage suggests that there are some significant immediate benefits of learning the Holocaust; the longer lasting effects are yet to be ascertained and will be done so following our third survey.

It is to this final point that we now turn. We obtained findings based on many more questions than we report in this paper. Our principal interest in this paper is to determine if the general improvements in positive values and attitudes of the pupils after their learning about the Holocaust were maintained in the first year of secondary education; and whether these pupils' positive attitudes in aspects of citizenship were similar or different to those of their peers who did not have an opportunity to study the Holocaust in their primary school.

Findings and Discussion

The core group's values

The values of the core group were welcomingly more or less maintained in relation to minorities not having to suffer racial abuse. For example, Table 1 shows that in no category were the pupils less positive than they had been at the start of the process and only in one area (attitudes towards Black people) was there any reduction from the post-Holocaust questionnaire/survey; and it was very slight.

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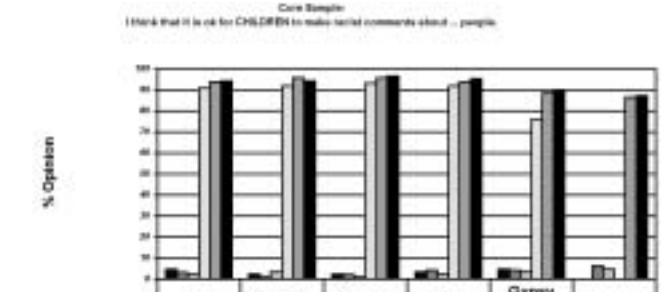
[1] There are currently nine school aged Gypsy Travellers in the authority and an anticipated significant influx of Gypsy Travellers to the area in the near future.

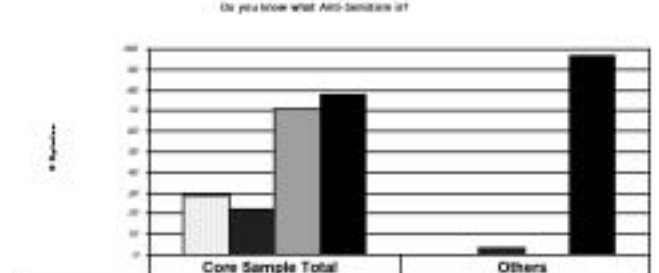
Table 1: Attitudes to children making racist comments about … people



	Jews	Blacks	Chinese	Asians	Gypsy Travellers	Refugees
Survey 1 Agree	4.6	2.3	2.3	3.4	4.6	
Survey 2 Agree	3.1	1	2.1	4.2	4.2	6.3
Survey 3 Agree	2.3	3.5	1.2	2.3	3.5	4.7
Survey 1 Disagree	90.8	92	93.1	92	75.9	
Survey 2 Disagree	93.8	95.8	95.8	93.8	89.6	88.6
Survey 3 Disagree	94.2	94.2	96.5	96.3	89.6	87.2

However, lest we become too complacent, there was a far less positive response to the statement about there being too many of a category of people in Scotland. As Table 2 shows, in every category pupils' attitudes became less tolerant; indeed, they not only went back below their post-Holocaust opinions, but a much larger number claimed they were unsure. For example, towards Jews 88.5% either agreed or disagreed in survey 2, thus 11.5% were unsure; in survey 3 73.3% agreed or disagreed, thus 26.7% were unsure. The 'agree' category remained stable at 10.4-10.5%, so we can surmise that many of those who disagreed moved to the unsure category. Interestingly, attitudes towards refugees held up better than the other variables, although this was the category which showed the most negative attitudes overall. The percentage 'agreeing' consistently decreased across the three surveys (24.1%, 19.8%, 11.6%) and the percentage 'disagreeing' increased by 13% from survey 1 to survey 3.

Table 2: Attitudes to number of … people in Scotland



	Core Sample Total	Others
Survey 2 Yes	29.2	
Survey 3 Yes	22.1	3.5
Survey 2 No	70.8	
Survey 3 No	77.9	96.5

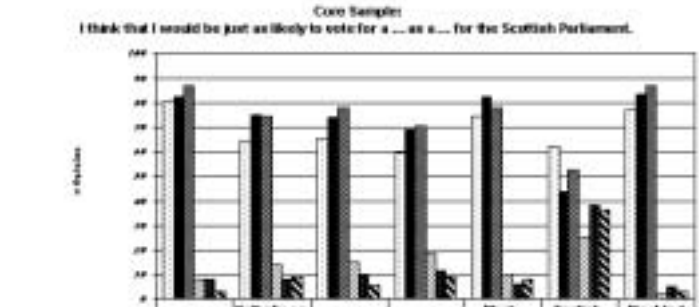
The differences between the attitudes in Tables 1 and 2 may relate to the perceived differences between prejudice and discrimination; the pupils perhaps feel that there are 'too many' minorities in Scotland but do not feel that there should be any abuse towards them.

One of the most contentious areas from the first stage of the survey was the voting potential of the sample and, in particular, the attitude towards English people. We summarised this in a paper (Maitles and Cowan, 2004) as:

> This suggests that anti-English feeling (probably for a variety of complex reasons ranging from imperial history and domination, through 'Braveheart' to the non-stop coverage of England's rugby world cup victory to perhaps a tendency amongst teachers to not see anti-English feeling as a problem to be tackled) has a resonance amongst young people in Scotland.

The results comparing the three questionnaires (Table 3) show that the improvements found after learning about the Holocaust have been generally maintained (e.g. voting attitudes re Catholics/Protestants) or continued to improve (e.g. voting attitudes re Woman/Man). Exceptions are attitudes to Black people (see Table 1 above); although the attitudes in this category were better in survey 3 than in survey 1, they had fallen back significantly from the position in survey 2. Interestingly, the attitudes towards English people improved most of all, although at 52.3% agreeing and 36% disagreeing, it was still significantly poorer than any other category.

Table 3: Voting attitudes

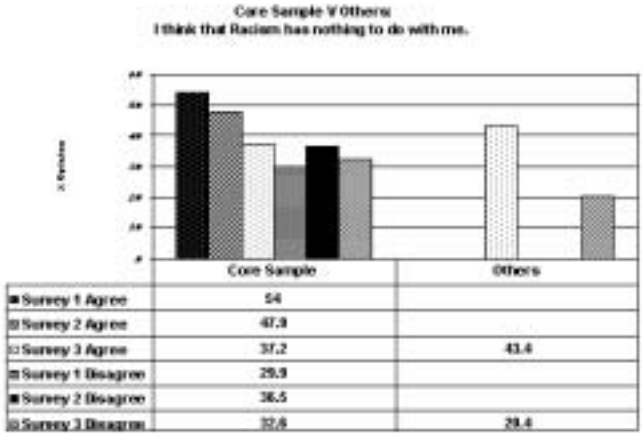


	Woman as a Man	Catholic as a Protestant	Jew as a Christian	Muslim as a Christian	Black person as a White	English person as a Scottish	Disabled person as an Able-
Survey 1 Agree	88.5	84.4	85.5	59.8	74.7	62.1	77
Survey 2 Agree	82.3	75	74	68.8	82.3	41.8	83.3
Survey 3 Agree	87.2	74.4	77.9	70.9	77.9	52.3	87.2
Survey 1 Disagree	8	13.8	14.9	18.4	18.3	25.3	2.3
Survey 2 Disagree	8.3	8.3	9.4	11.5	6.3	38.5	6.2
Survey 3 Disagree	3.5	9.3	5.8	8.3	8.1	36	3.5

Comparing core sample to others

Table 4 compares this in terms of the statement 'I think racism has nothing to do with me'. There is a significant difference between the core and 'others' group, with the core group having a smaller number agreeing with this statement and a larger number disagreeing with this statement. This suggests that the core group have a greater understanding of collective responsibility for racism than the 'others'. Happily, the attitudes of the core group improved steadily from survey 1 to survey 2 to survey 3.

Table 4: Comparison of core group and others – Racism has nothing to do with me

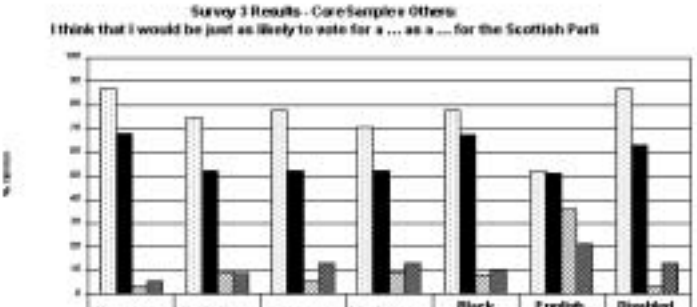


Finally, comparing attitudes towards voting, Table 5 suggests that in every category our core sample group are more tolerant and in every case bar the attitudes towards English it is highly significant. The negative attitudes towards the English are shared by the core group and the others. There are a far larger number of the others in the 'don't know' category.

Conclusions

In common with much research examining values and opinions, the results are not particularly clear cut. In some areas, there does seem in less than one year to be a welcome maintaining of the positive dispositions ascertained in the immediate aftermath of the lessons on the Holocaust. Yet it remains uneven; much tolerance and sympathy towards minorities is still held by our core group, although they have 'fallen back' vis-à-vis their attitude towards numbers of minorities. However, in most categories the attitudes were still better than they had been before the lessons on the Holocaust. There is still a worrying hostility towards English people and it is something that needs to be watched and combated, although there is perhaps a need to understand that it is possible that the pupils have a quite sophisticated understanding of the differences between oppressed and oppressors and English people do not fit into the category of oppressed.

Table 5: Comparison of core group and others- voting attitudes



	Woman as a Man	Catholic as a Protestant	Jewish a Christian	Muslim as a Christian	Black person as a White	English person as a Scottish	Disabled person as an Able-
Sample Agree	87.2	74.4	77.8	78.8	77.8	62.3	87.2
Others Agree	68.1	52.2	52.2	52.2	67.3	51.3	62.8
Sample Disagree	3.5	8.3	5.8	9.3	8.1	36	3.5
Others Disagree	6.3	8.8	13.3	13.3	18.6	21.2	13.3

In terms of comparing our sample group with their peers who did not study the Holocaust in primary school, there is evidence, outlined above, that the core group had stronger positive values, were more tolerant and were more disposed to active citizenship by their understanding of individual responsibility towards racism.

It thus seems fair to comment, without overstating it, that learning about the Holocaust can have both an immediate and lasting impact on pupils' values. Thus studying the Holocaust teaches citizenship targets that are central to the development of well-rounded young people. It is worth making the case to teachers that at some stage in their education (perhaps as young as is deemed feasible), pupils should have the opportunity to undertake structured learning experiences about the Holocaust, generalised to reflect the various forms of racism in today's society.

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