

HOW HAS BRITAIN REMEMBERED ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLOCAUST?

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PROJECT OVERVIEW AND SIGNIFICANCE

- My research investigates portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust over time. How has the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust been depicted?
- Drawing on my experience as a teacher, I focus on two key educational settings: classrooms and museums.
- This thesis matters *now*: in February 2022, the Community Security Trust recorded 2,255 anti-Jewish hate incidents reported across Britain in 2021. This is a 34% increase from 2020. (CST, 2022).
- Movements such as Black Lives Matter have increased appetite for self-reflective British history.



Kindertransport refugees, 1938.

BRITAIN AND THE HOLOCAUST: A COMPLEX ISSUE

- I take the Holocaust as a process (not an event), which began in the early 1930s and extended to 1945 and beyond.
- In the 1930s, Britain welcomed thousands of refugees from Nazi persecution, through schemes such as the *Kindertransport*.
- But there was also antisemitism in Britain, and the government blocked immigration of Jews.
- During WW2, despite British knowledge of atrocities, there was no decisive action. For example, in 1944, the RAF chose *not* to bomb Auschwitz.



UCL Institute of Education: a key textbook library.

METHODOLOGIES

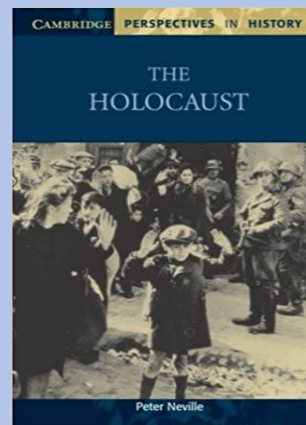
- Key source materials: history textbooks and Holocaust museums.
- Mixed methods approach, involving quantitative and qualitative analysis.
- Interviews with museum staff were an effective means of gaining deeper insights.
- I used content analysis throughout: “analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material”. (Krippendorff, 2004, p.xvii.).



HELC, Huddersfield

CONTEXT 1: CLASSROOM MATERIALS

- I analysed over 50 examples of history textbooks and classroom materials dating from 1991 onwards.
- Britain and the Holocaust was mainly taught to younger age groups (e.g., Key Stage 3), limiting the complexity with which it was portrayed.
- There was variable periodisation – some textbooks focussed heavily on the WW2 years, whilst others explored less obvious topics such as post-war Holocaust memory.
- Primary source material was shown to be a useful teaching aid – it brought closer the histories of Britain and the Holocaust.



Textbook example: *The Holocaust* (Neville, 1999)

CONTEXT 2: MUSEUMS

- Close case study of two nascent institutions: National Holocaust Centre & Museum (NHCM) in Nottinghamshire, and Holocaust Exhibition & Learning Centre in Huddersfield.
- Practical constraints limited extent to which British response to the Holocaust could be explored in museums: a lack of exhibition space was critical.
- There was a sense of ‘detachment’ between Britain and the Holocaust. The relationship is difficult to portray through physical historical artefacts.
- Interviews with museum staff showed awareness of these limitations. It is an area which has been highlighted for development.



KEY TAKEAWAYS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust lacked depth and nuance.
- Greater efforts are needed to equip educators with the tools, training, and curriculum time to present the topic in adequate detail. This will help to avoid simplistic historical interpretations.
- The proposed United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial (UKHM) in Westminster is an ideal opportunity to engage with British history in a more critical fashion.



Proposed UKHM, Westminster.