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Michael Sparrow

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Article Review: Lindquist, D. H. (2006). Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust: Avoiding Common Pedagogical Errors. *Social Studies*, 97(5), 215-221.

Reviewed by Michael Sparrow
University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

In his article, ‘Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust: Avoiding Common Pedagogical Errors’, Lindquist (2006) acknowledges the challenges and difficulties that can arise when educators try to teach students about the Holocaust. His article argues that because of these challenges and difficulties, there are eight educational problems commonly found within the teaching pedagogy. Lindquist asserts that these errors can be avoided, and consequently offers some insight as to how the Holocaust can be taught “right”.

One problematic error that Lindquist discusses is how “many teachers believe that the Holocaust can be taught effectively through an emphasis on numbers” (p. 215). When taught as a big statistic, he argues that educators often fail to incorporate the many individual stories and events. In contrast, he believes that the Anne Frank case study is too heavily focused on in schools, for example, he quotes that “Anne Frank’s story *is* the Holocaust for many students” (p.216).

Teaching the Holocaust can be controversial, and educators need not be afraid to lead students into discussion. Lindquist stresses that it is our duty as educators to expose students to controversial issues regarding the Holocaust, and without such exposure, we would be not be “giving students

valuable experiences in the practice of living in a democratic society” (p. 218). The Holocaust cannot be fully understood unless it is included within the framework of the Second World War; Lindquist argues that too often each is represented as independent events.

The re-creation of Holocaust experiences through student simulation and games should be avoided in Lindquist’s opinion. He explains that students can never fully understand what these individual experiences were like. He asserts that simulation can have value, however it often only ends up “trivializing the victims, dishonoring the memories of the victims, and diminishing opportunities for students to engage in viable, challenging learning experiences” (p. 219). He argues that trivialization and un-engaged learners can also be the product of many high school textbooks that feature mundane “fill-in-the-blank responses” (p. 217) and often ignore critical thinking skills.

Frequently accompanying these boring, inappropriate classroom activities are the usage of graphic pictures and media to connect with students. Lindquist strongly advocates that this method should be “used sparingly and carefully” (p. 219). Perhaps then is Holocaust education only suitable for certain age groups? Lindquist argues that only those in the middle school program and above should be

learning about the Holocaust. By questioning the emotional maturity of younger children he states that, “we must ask what we gain and what we risk when we expose young children to such sensitive, potentially overwhelming materials” (p. 219).

Lindquist emphasizes that neither students, nor any person, can fully intellectually comprehend or develop an emotional response to approximately 6 million deaths. Placing this statistic in its context is important. I agree that students need to understand the overwhelming totals, but the significance of individual stories and people cannot be overlooked. I liked how he stressed the importance of fostering controversial discussion in the classroom. Social Studies educators, or educators of any discipline, should always support the inclusion of controversial discussion. Educators should also strive to answer students’ questions in a rational and well-informed manner. I agree that using graphic images to shock, and make history more relatable, is not the best way to connect with students. I think that this approach has its place, and I agree with Lindquist in that this media should be used in accordance with your classroom and lesson objectives. His argument that only middle school aged children and older should be allowed to learn about the Holocaust is one that I do not necessarily agree with. While this subject matter can be overwhelming and incomprehensible to younger students, it is debatable whether someone is capable of, or should

be exposed to, learning about the Holocaust and other historical atrocities. The choice of middle school students and above also seemed like an arbitrary decision. Who is to say that some younger children are not as emotionally mature than older ones? I think that you can teach the issues and key concepts about the Holocaust to younger age groups, but you have to really be careful in your planning and execution.

Lindquist’s arguments about the Holocaust are thought provoking. I agree with Lindquist in that teaching the Holocaust can be naturally challenging, and therefore requires a courageous educator to teach it. Furthermore, I like that he brings these pedagogical issues to the forefront of academic discussion. Overall, I think that there is much to take away from this article that has relevancy and applications for future teaching. However, much of what Lindquist and other academics in this article have stated about teaching the Holocaust is purely opinion. Lindquist also doesn’t really use statistical evidence to help his argument. He often expands on what previous academics noted and surmises that their opinions, along with his own, are factual. As a final note, I think it would have been interesting for Lindquist to include some high school students’ thoughts regarding their own learning of the Holocaust in current classrooms. This would have helped bridge the gap between theory and practice.



How does this article impact my future teaching practice?

- Before teaching the Holocaust I would first assess my classroom's knowledge base, such as what do they already know about it? What do they know about WW2?
- I would stress the importance of the Holocaust's impact on individual cases within the context of larger statistics
- Take care using graphic images and media in my classroom, but not avoid these important sources as they have a place
- Be an advocate of controversial discussion and attempt to facilitate conversation in a critical and caring manner
- Try to gain feedback from my students, through questioning, assessment, and dialogue, in order to see what teaching strategies and activities actively engage and facilitate their learning