

**Research  Evaluation**

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***Echoes and Reflections* in Idaho and Tennessee:**

**A Report for the Conference on Jewish**

**Material Claims Against Germany**

**Application 7700, Fund SO28**

**Submitted by Dr. Erik H. Cohen**

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## Introduction

This report concerns participants in *Echoes and Reflections* programs in two states—Idaho and Tennessee—who were enlisted as part of a Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany grant (Application 7700, Fund SO28). In order to understand the special case of these two states, this report will compare the results of the questionnaires completed by the participants in several ways, namely, a comparison between the attitudes of the same participants before the program began and their reported attitudes after the program terminated; this comparison will directly point at the results of the program. The same questions concerning attitudes are presented in both pre- and post-questionnaires, permitting an exact comparison between the answers. 282 participants completed the questionnaire before the program began (pre), out of which 89 are from Idaho and 193 from Tennessee; and 123 completed the questionnaire presented to them after the program terminated (post), out of which 5 are from Idaho and 118 from Tennessee.

The second method of comparison is between the results of these two states to the overall results of the *Echoes and Reflections* program evaluation in the U.S. (referred to as “overall population”). This larger evaluation has been implemented in a variety of states and schools and the comparison with the overall results positions Idaho and Tennessee in relation to others, and thus helps understand what happened in these two states. These two methods of comparison are summative: they compare the general population of the participants with itself (before and after) and with another comparable population (the overall participants in the U.S.). The larger study was conducted in nine states with 16 teachers and 1,116 students completing questionnaires.

The third method of comparison is internal to the participants of the program in the two states, comparing fragments of this population amongst themselves. This method of comparison is useful in order to analyze the impact of the program on diverse sub-populations within these states, and their differential degree of suitability to this program. We therefore compared girls to boys, and younger participants (ninth grade and under) to older participants. Since the information which may indicate the success of the program is to be found in the “post” questionnaires—and these were a small number—it is impossible to distribute this population into very small groups and still retain significant results. For that reason we could not check the impact of other criteria such as ethnicity (whereas gender and age separate this population into more or less equal numbers, ethnicity as we shall see does not, thus leaving very few partisans in the non-white sub-population).

### The Idaho and Tennessee Populations

The demographic data concerning the participants stem from the first (pre) questionnaire; this questionnaire was completed by 89 participants from Idaho and 193 participants from Tennessee. The survey population of Idaho is very young: 46% less than 13 years old, 45% are 14 years old, and 9% are 15 and 16 years old, with no participant from Idaho older than that. However, the Tennessee survey population is older; most of them (with the exception of 11) are 15 or older.

With regard to gender, the Idaho population is divided in half, but amongst the Tennessee students approximately two-thirds are boys (68%), and only a third are girls (32%).

As for ethnicity, in both states the vast majority describe themselves as “white.” Approximately 20% of the population (16% in Idaho and 21% in Tennessee) identify themselves as “not white.” Among the overall population of those who participated in the national *Echoes and Reflections* study in the U.S., 83% are white whereas in these two states 69% are white and 16% of the Idaho participants say they are Hispanic, in comparison to only 3% of the Tennessee participants.

## Comparison of Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

Because there are so few responses to the post-program questionnaire among Idaho participants (5 individuals), the comparison between the pre- and post-questionnaire, as well as the direct evaluation of the program as it stems from the post-questionnaire which indicates the impact of the program, pertains mainly to Tennessee.

Two groups of questions that are repeated in both pre- and post-questionnaires are intended to measure the change in attitudes resulting from the program (see Table 1). The first group of questions tests the exposure to the Holocaust and asks "How would you rate your current knowledge of the following?" and presents 16 items concerning the history of the Holocaust. The students state that they know more about all the items on the list after studying *Echoes and Reflections*. The five items on that list to which the students are the most exposed, namely, those which they say they know much more about after the program than they knew before it had started, are: The history of antisemitism, pre-war Jewish life in Germany, non-Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, how different countries were affected by the Holocaust, and how different countries responded to the Holocaust while it was taking place.

The second group of questions included in both the pre- and post program questionnaires, concern attitudes. The respondents are requested to score the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements concerning the historical lessons of the Holocaust. Interestingly, on most statements their agreement became weaker after the program. For example, when asked to note the degree of their agreement to the statement: "The government in my country should act to stop genocide in other countries", 33% *strongly agree* with this statement before the program, but only 5% *strongly agree* after. While 21% *strongly agree* that "The effects of Holocaust are still being felt today" before the program, only 6% say they feel that way after. However, the -.16 change to the statement "the Holocaust is NOT relevant to my life" may actually be a positive trend in that the statement was written in the negative. This tendency may be a result of the exposure which renders the awareness and understanding of these issues more complex. An example is that while 31% *strongly agree* before learning *Echoes and Reflections* that "One person can make a difference if they see a pointed example of stereotyping against a group of people", only 19% *strongly agree* after the program. This leads one to consider whether awareness of the scope of what happened in the Holocaust may cause the students to be more modest about the potential influence of one person in a case of aggressive racism.

Two other groups of questions are presented in the post-questionnaire only and are designed to reveal the direct impact of the program as the participants perceive it (see Table 1). The participants are asked: "How helpful were each of the following types of classroom activities you may have used with the *Echoes and Reflections* curriculum?" The whole-class discussions receive the highest scores (35% say they are "extremely helpful") and 30% say research activities are "extremely helpful". When asked: "Please rate your impression of the following components of *Echoes and Reflections*", photographs and pictures get the highest score with 41% of students answering that the photographs are "excellent." Other aspects of the curriculum are also considered excellent: 25% of students give a response of "excellent" to interviews, 23% to art work, and 22% to video testimony and government documents.

## Comparison with the Overall Population

An important difference between the population of participants in Tennessee and Idaho as compared with the overall population is age.

A large percentage of the survey populations in these two states (especially Idaho) is young, which may account for much of the discrepancy between this sub-population and the overall population of *Echoes and Reflections* programs nationwide. Therefore, in certain cases we compare the results of the younger students only. Thus, the following results are separate for the younger and older students: Tables 1 and 2 concern the respondents who are in ninth grade or younger, while Tables 3 and 4 concern the students older than ninth grade.

To further compare the responses to questions that are in both the pre- and post-program questionnaires, we perform a statistical operation called DISCO. This creates one number that is a summation of comparison between the answers given before the program and after. DISCO therefore measures the discrepancy between the answers given before and after the program. The results range from -1 to 1. A DISCO result of 0 means that means that no change has occurred. A result higher than 0 indicates a positive change, and the closer the DISCO result is to 1 the more positive a change has occurred. By contrast, a result of less than 0 indicates that a negative change has occurred and as the DISCO approaches -1 the more negative a change has occurred<sup>1</sup>. For example, the first item in Table 1 is to be read in the following manner: the answers of the students, younger than ninth grade in Tennessee and Idaho to the question "How would you rate your current knowledge of the general history of the Holocaust?" has improved (DISCO = 0.59); however, the response of the overall population of participants younger than ninth grade to the same question has improved even more (DISCO = 0.79).

For most questions the Idaho and Tennessee younger population (ninth grade or younger) scored lower than the overall population with a few notable exceptions. We would like to remind readers that this younger population is mainly from Tennessee. For the questions in Table 1 "How would you rate your current knowledge of non-Jewish resistance during the Holocaust?" the DISCO for the participants from the two states who are younger than ninth grade is 0.71 while the DISCO for the overall population is 0.53. Similarly, for the question "How would you rate your current knowledge of present-day genocide?" the DISCO for the participants from the two states who are younger than ninth grade is 0.77 while the DISCO for the overall population is 0.69. For the question in Table 2, "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Holocaust is an important subject to study in school?" the DISCO for the participants from the two states who are younger than ninth grade is 0.31 while the DISCO for the overall population is 0.23. As for other answers in Table 2, many items' DISCO score is negative, indicating that their opinions on the matter have deteriorated.

In contrast, for the participants older than ninth grade (Tables 3 and 4), for many of the questions, the participants from the two states scored more or less the same as the overall population and at several times higher. For example, to the question "How would you rate your current knowledge of the general history of antisemitism?" (Table 3) the DISCO for participants from the two states who are younger than ninth grade is 0.70 while the DISCO for the overall population is 0.58. This signifies that the students from Idaho and Tennessee have undergone a positive change with regard to this question and that this change is greater than the change within the overall U.S. participants' population. Similarly, for the question "How would you rate your current knowledge of how different countries were affected by the Holocaust?" the DISCO for the participants from the two states who are older than ninth grade is 0.71 while the DISCO for the overall population is 0.58.

Yet, even for the older students, for the questions "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" (Table 4) the DISCO for the participants from the two states is lower and often negative when compared to the larger sample. For example, when asked "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Holocaust is an important subject to study in school?" the DISCO for the older (above ninth grade) Tennessee and Idaho participants is -0.05, while the score for the overall population is 0.29.

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<sup>1</sup> This operation sums up the difference in the answers to all categories of answers such as to the question "How would you rate your current knowledge of the following?", "I don't know anything about it", "I don't know very much about it", "I know a little bit about it", "I know a fair amount about it", "I know a lot about it" and renders them in one average number.

## Ninth Grade and Younger vs. Older Participants

As mentioned above, the Idaho students are much younger than the Tennessee students, and also younger than the average age of the overall population. Since we know from data on the overall population that *Echoes and Reflections* is appreciated more by older students, we separate the younger student (ninth grade and younger) from the older students (above ninth grade), allowing us to verify whether the younger population is the cause of lower scores on the impact of the program in comparison to the overall population. The number of respondents to the post-questionnaire that are younger than ninth grade is 22, while the older respondents to that questionnaire are 101. This relatively small number of younger respondents does not allow a detailed comparison. We will provide here some of the specificities of the younger population; the older students' responses mostly conform to the results of the entire population of the two states.

Looking at the younger population before the *Echoes and Reflections* intervention in comparison to the overall population indicates that this population in the two states is less informed than the correspondent, younger population among the national survey population. Whereas only 16% of the younger students from Idaho and Tennessee heard about the Holocaust from their parents, 38% of the younger students of the overall population heard about it from their parents. Similarly, whereas only 22% of the younger participants in the two states heard about the Holocaust from television, 51% of the overall population heard about the Holocaust through this medium. Only 31% of the young students in these two states learned about the Holocaust in the Internet as compared to 45% of the overall population.

Interestingly, the attitudes towards statements regarding the Holocaust are similar between the younger population in the two states and the overall population. However, there is a distinctly less assertive attitude towards challenging racism among the younger students in Tennessee and Idaho. Whereas in the overall population 37% chose the answer *strongly disagree* to the statement "It is important that everyone challenges racism", 45% in the two states chose that answer. In other words, the respondents in the two states are less interested in fighting racism than their counterparts in other parts of the country. In the same vein amongst the younger students, 25% of the overall population and 38% of the two states *strongly disagree* with the statement "The government of my country should act to stop genocide in other countries." Further, 38% of the overall in comparison to 51% in the two states *strongly disagree* that negative opinions about a group of people can lead to violence. 20% of the younger students from the two states *strongly agree* with the statement "Denying that the Holocaust happened can have a damaging effect on society" in comparison to 49% amongst the younger overall population. 27% of the students in the two states *strongly agree* that negative opinions about a group can lead to violence, whereas 50% of the overall population chose that response. These responses indicate that the populations in these two states hold more conservative views.

The degree to which students say they have learned about various subjects as a result of the program is similar among the younger students in the two states and the overall population. One exception is that 36% of the younger students in the two states say that they have learned "a lot" about pre-war Jewish life in Germany in comparison to 13% of the overall population. In contrast, the younger students of the two states say they learned less about the extermination camps and the ghettos in Eastern and Central Europe than the corresponding students in the overall population. Additionally, the younger students from the two states are more strongly convinced that the Holocaust is an important subject to study at school: 73% of them state that they *strongly agree* with this statement in comparison to 44% of the overall younger population.

Another difference between the younger population in Idaho and Tennessee and the overall younger population pertains to their appreciation of the various components of the program. The young students in these two states gave a higher evaluation to a sweeping majority of the components of the program, as compared to the evaluation given by the younger students in the overall population. A remarkable 72% of the younger students of the two states say that the whole-class discussions are "extremely helpful" in comparison to only 35% of the

corresponding overall students who choose that answer. In the same vein, 54% of the two states' younger respondents in comparison to only 15% in the overall younger population say that journal writing is "extremely helpful." Another exceptional result is that 50% of the two states in comparison to 9% of the overall population state that the component "poetry" of the *Echoes and Reflections* program is excellent. Interestingly, the percentage of English teachers participating in the program in these two states is similar to that in the whole sample.

### **Girls and Boys**

We know from the overall population that girls are more sensitive to the *Echoes and Reflections* program and evaluate it more positively. Two-thirds of the Tennessee respondents are boys, and that may account for the differences between the overall population and the two states.

In Idaho, a particular pattern appears in which boys tend to declare in the pre-questionnaire that they have a greater knowledge about the Holocaust than girls. For example 23% of the boys in Idaho say they know "a lot" in response to the question, "How would you rate your current knowledge of the rise of Nazism?" as compared to only 7% of the girls. Similarly, 34% of the boys say they know "a lot" about the ghettos, while only 22% of the girls say so; 16% of the boys and none of the girls choose the category "a lot" concerning their knowledge of the liberation at the end of the war in Europe, and so forth. The opposite tendency is characteristic of the agreement and disagreement on the attitudinal statements. For example, while 42% of the girls *strongly agree* in the pre-questionnaire that denying the Holocaust happened can have a damaging effect on society, only 25% of the boys say so. Similarly, while 47% of the girls *strongly agree* in the pre-questionnaire that the government in their own country should act to stop genocide in other countries, only 34% of the boys say so.

In the general population of the two states however this tendency is weakened. For example, in response to the question, "How would you rate your current knowledge of the rise of Nazism?" 21% of the boys say they know "a lot" in comparison to only 9% of the girls and the difference between boys and girls is even reversed concerning other items. For example whereas 20% of the girls declare that they know "a lot" about the history of antisemitism, only 5% of the boys choose this answer. Correspondingly, in the post-questionnaire the girls also say that they know "a lot" more than the boys about the subjects of the program. For example, 46% of the girls say they know "a lot" about the extermination camps, while 25% of the boys choose that answer, and 20% of the girls and only 8% of the boys claim after the program that they know "a lot" about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

Concerning the agreement or disagreement to statements about the Holocaust, the girls are systematically more decisive in their responses. For example, 68% of the girls and 40% of the boys *strongly agree* that the Holocaust is an important subject to study in school. 73% of the girls and 40% of the boys *strongly agree* that the Holocaust is an important part of history. From these responses it is clear that the program's impact on girls is much more salient than on boys.

### **Conclusions**

Our strongest conclusion and recommendation is that *Echoes and Reflections* is not suitable in its current form for students of ninth grade and less, and should therefore not be implemented with this young population. Students at this age are simply too young to measure up with this issue, which is complex both cognitively and emotionally. This is not to say that it is not desirable to teach the Holocaust to younger students; it can be done and is appropriate, but in order to teach the Holocaust to these younger children other methods should be identified.

The second remark has to be verified through other means, but, according to the teachers' questionnaires, it seems that the population of students in Idaho and Tennessee emanates from lower socio-economic strata in relation to the overall population. This population may

need more attention in providing better ways of approaching the teaching of the Holocaust. Again, this is merely an indication to be checked.

Lastly, and this remark is true not only to the Idaho and Tennessee populations but to the overall population, the overwhelming and systematic findings indicate that the program has a much stronger impact on the attitudes of the girls than of boys. The reasons for this phenomenon should be studied more closely and perhaps additional ways to relate to boys should be considered.

**Table 1**

**DISCO of the PRE- and POST- questionnaires of students younger than 9th grade to the following:**

**How would you rate your current knowledge of the following?**

	<b>Idaho/ Tennessee</b>	<b>Other States</b>
The general history of the Holocaust	.59	.79
The history of antisemitism	.64	.81
Pre-war Jewish life in Germany	.71	.78
The rise of Nazism	.38	.68
Nazi ideology	.47	.63
Nazi propaganda	.53	.76
The ghettos in Eastern and Central Europe	.26	.84
Extermination camps	.17	.62
Jewish resistance during the Holocaust	.59	.59
Non-Jewish resistance during the Holocaust	.71	.53
Hidden children	.68	.75
Liberation at the end of the war in Europe	.45	.72
War crimes trials following WWII	.48	.61
Nazi collaborators	.75	.71
How different countries were affected by the Holocaust	.43	.69
How different countries responded to the Holocaust while it was taking place	.35	.72
Present-day genocide	.77	.69

**Table 2**

**DISCO of the PRE- and POST- questionnaires of students younger than 9<sup>th</sup> grade to the following:**

**Please read each statement below and mark one box in each row to show how much you much you agree or disagree.**

	<b>Idaho/ Tennessee</b>	<b>Other States</b>
The Holocaust is an important subject to study in school.	.31	.23
The Holocaust is an important part of history.	.18	.31
The effects of the Holocaust are still being felt today.	.09	.60
The Holocaust is not relevant to my life.	-.16	-.26
Denying the Holocaust happened can have a damaging effect on society.	-.26	.41
It is important that everyone challenges racism.	.04	.11
Genocide in other countries is not relevant to my life.	.01	-.13
The government in my country should act to stop genocide in other countries.	-.13	.17
Negative opinions about a group of people can lead to violence.	-.51	.39
It is important that I speak up against any stereotyping that I see around me.	-.62	.08
One person can make a difference if they see an example of stereotyping against a group of people.	-.37	.22
How interested are you in studying about the Holocaust?	.76	.06

**Table 3**

**DISCO of the PRE- and POST- questionnaires of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades students to the question:**

**How would you rate your current knowledge of the following?**

	<b>Idaho/ Tennessee</b>	<b>Other States</b>
The general history of the Holocaust	.59	.57
The history of antisemitism	.70	.58
Pre-war Jewish life in Germany	.74	.70
The rise of Nazism	.48	.56
Nazi ideology	.54	.58
Nazi propaganda	.60	.59
The ghettos in Eastern and Central Europe	.62	.65
Extermination camps	.28	.55
Jewish resistance during the Holocaust	.64	.59
Non-Jewish resistance during the Holocaust	.71	.56
Hidden children	.66	.53
Liberation at the end of the war in Europe	.59	.58
War crimes trials following WWII	.61	.51
Nazi collaborators	.78	.69
How different countries were affected by the Holocaust	.71	.58
How different countries responded to the Holocaust while it was taking place	.72	.62
Present-day genocide	.68	.53

**Table 4**

**DISCO of the PRE- and POST- questionnaires of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades students to the question:**

**Please read each statement below and mark one box in each row to show how much you much you agree or disagree.**

	<b>Idaho/ Tennessee</b>	<b>Other States</b>
The Holocaust is an important subject to study in school.	-05	.29
The Holocaust is an important part of history.	-.24	.15
The effects of the Holocaust are still being felt today.	.11	.21
The Holocaust is not relevant to my life.	-.30	-.14
Denying the Holocaust happened can have a damaging effect on society.	-.11	.08
It is important that everyone challenges racism.	-.04	.14
Genocide in other countries is not relevant to my life.	-.06	-.05
The government in my country should act to stop genocide in other countries.	-.23	.16
Negative opinions about a group of people can lead to violence.	-.13	.10
It is important that I speak up against any stereotyping that I see around me.	-.04	.20
One person can make a difference if they see an example of stereotyping against a group of people.	.01	.21
How interested are you in studying about the Holocaust?	.03	.01

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