

A Tool in the Arsenal

Atrocity Education as a Measure to Prevent Radicalization

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Research Question and Thesis

- Can teaching about atrocity in high school prevent radicalization of young people to violent extremist ideologies?
- By examining the goals and purposes of Holocaust education used in the United States, teaching atrocity provides students understanding, insight, causes, and context leading up to atrocity. Furthermore, by providing interpersonal narratives of those affected by atrocity, students are able to empathize with victims on a human level.
- Thus, knowing how past or current atrocity arises both politically and socially and how atrocity affects people;
 - students are able to identify violent extremist groups,
 - critically analyze extremist narratives,
 - reject narratives that call for violence.
- A lesson plan was created for a high school English class to teach atrocity in the context of the Syrian Civil War after reading Elie Wiesel's *Night*.

Radicalization and Pull Factors

- Violent extremism refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically-motivated violence to achieve radical ideological, religious or political views
- Violent extremist groups usually target young people of all ages, sexes, groups, or communities.
- Pull Factors:
 - Compelling narrative and attractive objectives
 - Providing services
 - “A place to belong”- social network and group dynamics

Holocaust Education

- 5 Approaches to Teaching the Holocaust Effectively (Lindquist)
 - Situating the Holocaust as a Central Event in World History
 - Defining Patterns of Human Behavior
 - Viewing Holocaust Education as a force for social and educational change within the context of the civic values upon which democratic societies are anchored
 - Examining the Holocaust as a catalyst for fostering intellectual and personal growth in both students and teachers due to the subject's complexity and the high interest level that the topic generates
 - Situating the Holocaust as a Primary Focus of Contemporary Education
- Focus of Holocaust Education:
 - Root Causes
 - Narratives of victims
 - Political and social context of the Holocaust

Education as a Tool to CVE

- Quality education equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes.
- UNESCO 4 Ways Education Prevents Violent Extremism:
 - Develop the communication and interpersonal skills they need to dialogue, face disagreement and learn peaceful approaches to change.
 - Help learners develop their critical thinking to investigate claims, verify rumors and question the legitimacy and appeal of extremist beliefs
 - Help learners develop the resilience to resist extremist narratives and acquire the social emotional skills they need to overcome their doubts and engage constructively in society without having to resort to violence
 - Foster critically informed citizens able to constructively engage in peaceful collective action
- Holocaust Education/Atrocity Education Share Same Goals:
 - Focuses on Root Causes of Atrocity
 - Identifies Political and Social forces that lead to Atrocity
 - Identify with victims of atrocity through interpersonal narratives and stories
 - Critical thinking and awareness of past an current atrocity, help defeat new extremist beliefs

Syrian Civil War and Current Atrocity Education

- Syrian Civil War Has been ongoing for more than 6 years leading to more than 300,000 dead and millions displaced.
 - The conflict is highly publicized. Images of atrocity are available on social media.
- Numerous Atrocities
 - Majority committed by the Syrian Government against its own people
 - Torture, Rape, Use of Illicit Weapons, Extrajudicial Killings, etc.
 - Syrian Accountability Project (SAP) has individually documented thousands
- Teaching the Syrian Civil War to a High School English Class

Recommendations/Lasting Thoughts

- Atrocity Education is a key tool to help CVE
 - Should be a larger focus in education
 - Added focus on current conflicts that affect students today
- Lasting Thoughts
 - Education is only one tool, although very important.
 - Push Factors to radicalization must also be addressed
 - Effectiveness of education dependent on government focus and support
- “Educating the mind without educating the heart, is no education at all.” - Aristotle