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## Impact of Study Abroad to Nazi Concentration Camps: Perceptions of Interpreting Students on Identity-Building

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### Cover Page Footnote

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# **Impact of Study Abroad to Nazi Concentration Camps: Perceptions of Interpreting Students on Identity-Building**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the perceptions of post-secondary interpreting students who traveled to concentration camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland) and Schloss Hartheim (Austria). The historical context of spoken language interpreters in concentration camps, eugenics in the Deaf community, and extermination of people with disabilities underpin the study's mixed-methods design, incorporating social identity and transformative learning theories to explore professional identity development. A Deaf, Jewish moderator-participant facilitated four focus groups using photo elicitation to foster narratives. Participants ranked photos and value statements to reveal identity components that most impacted them. A grounded theory approach to analysis revealed four themes triangulated with survey data: productive dissonance, justice and equity, communal coping, and consumer orientation. Data verified students were strongly impacted by negotiating communication with Deaf nationals, sharing disorienting experiences with colleagues, and applying Holocaust education to their personal, social, and professional identities. Results are useful for students, interpreters, and programs seeking ways to address social justice concerns through experiential learning.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Professional identity, an element of social identity, is dynamically constructed to make sense of who we are and the roles we play across situations and populations. A person's social and professional identities fuse according to the values, principles, and self-awareness developed over time (Buck et al., 2019). Interpreting students begin formulating professional identities through applying ethical decision-making to critical elements of an interpreter's work, such as role-space creation, participation equity, moral competence, conflict resolution, and environmental negotiation (Hunt, 2015; Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014; Napier et al., 2017). If educational programs inadequately guide students through building the "confidence that comes with competence, status, and a strong professional identity" (Hale, 2007, p. 35), students may graduate with narrow perspectives of the interpreter's responsibilities and ethical practices that are ineffective and unsafe (Heidermann & Weininger, 2019). Furthermore, Jones and Abes (2013) caution about the impact of program negligence when students do not receive structured identity-building interventions to enhance cognitive processing and affective development.

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THROUGH GROUP TRAVEL

Experiences outside the traditional classroom promote new perspectives about one's work and worldviews (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and study abroad is a form of experiential learning that improves critical thinking about social inequities, intercultural sensitivity, peer connectedness, and identity development (Ruth et al., 2019; Tarrant, 2010). Additionally, short-term study abroad can be a transformative experience that promotes resilience, appreciation for diversity, and rethinking of preconceived beliefs (DiFrancesco et al., 2019). Groups that travel together become a "complex microsystem" in which students interact with each other and foreign nationals to gain perspective on their own identities (Johnstone et al., 2020, p. 129). Within this microsystem, students create a relational structure that can make lasting impact on their careers (Jones & Abes, 2013; Okken et al., 2019).

## HOLOCAUST ILLITERACY

Holocaust education opens dialogue with students about the consequences of ethnic, social, and religious stereotyping on contemporary societal issues. Aalai (2020) supports showing students how "pervasive parallels persist between [the Holocaust] genocide and the continued violation of others' rights and *othering* of marginalized groups" (p. 211). Recent polling indicated 73% of Americans have never visited a Holocaust memorial (Pew Research Center, 2020), and while 90% of young Americans believe the Holocaust happened, 63% do not know six million Jews were killed, 48% cannot name one concentration camp, and 20% believe Jews caused the Holocaust (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 2020). These knowledge deficits contribute to the need for extending student experience beyond traditional means, "integrating historically, politically, and ideologically marginalized narratives and...having one's own limited perspective broadened through having pre-established belief systems questioned" (Hunt, 2015, p. 312). Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory suggests how interpreting students might make sense of disorienting experiences inherent to experiential Holocaust education and follow a process of self-examination, assumptions assessment, option exploration, and action planning. Wiesel (2009), Holocaust survivor and co-founder of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, urged memorializing what had happened for future generations:

Over the years, week by week, day by day, the number of survivors of the Holocaust diminishes and those of the documents increases... We are holding to [its memory] with our last energy... The murderous intentions of Hitler and his acolytes towards the Jewish people and its history, their plans concerning other national and ethnic minorities, the malefic power of their imagination, the quasi-indifference of the free world, the suffering and agony of the victims as well as their solitude: how to conceive them in their totality, and how to explain them. (Wiesel, p. xxvii)

## INTERPRETERS AS FUNCTIONARIES

Applying the incidents and context of the Holocaust to our work as interpreters begins with an understanding of how interpreters became essential within the multi-lingual concentration camp system. Interpreters were either commissioned personnel serving alongside camp administrators or ad hoc communication facilitators who were prisoners themselves. According to Wolf (2016), prison populations might present up to 40 languages at once, and the interpreter's duties related to translating records and communicating camp rules, orders, interrogations, roll call, and

punishments. Language differences among prisoners resulted in the creation of a camp lingua franca, a unique form of German called ‘crematorium Esperanto’” (p. 95). Language became weaponized for demeaning prisoners and responding appropriately to a command was a matter of life or death (Aschenberg, 2016; Wolf, 2013). As with other essential laborers, interpreters were primarily prisoner-functionaries who were coerced into performing as a matter of survival (Halpin, 2018). Functionaries could receive extra rations, but their work expectations were shrouded in chaos, which was integral to creating disorder within individuals (Tryuk, 2010; Wolf, 2016). Interpreter-functionaries were unable to apply professional standards, and Primo (1988) coined the term ‘grey zone’ to describe a survival space in which camp interpreters struggled with guilt, confusion, risk, and identity loss (Tryuk, 2016, p. 31).

## **EUGENICS AND THE DEAF POPULATION**

Aside from the study of interpreters in concentration camps, Holocaust experiential learning for interpreters would be incomplete without considering the impact of genetic cleansing initiatives on Deaf people who fell victim to Hitler’s policies to improve genetics through selective breeding (called *eugenics*). The ‘Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases’ led to annihilation of “people who were deemed inferior, burdensome existences, and unworthy of life” (Biesold, 1999, p. 160) through forced sterilizations, abortion, infanticide, marriage restrictions, and extermination. Deaf people with disabilities were transferred to locations where they would be euthanized, but internment of Deaf Jews in concentration camps is far less documented. Whereas Deaf Jews were considered unfit to live under Nazi law, Deaf people stood a better chance of survival if they avoided signing publicly and separated themselves from other Deaf inmates (Zaurov, 2016). There are no records of signed language interpreters working in the concentration camps other than stories of heritage signers who communicated secretly with Deaf inmates.

## **SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

A Deaf-Hearing faculty team from the University of North Florida (UNF) recruited eleven ASL/English Interpreting and Deaf Education students to travel to Schloss Hartheim Euthanasia Center (Alkoven, Austria) and Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum (Oświęcim, Poland). The primary consideration for participating in the study abroad was the ability to use ASL, and all applicants qualified to attend. The 11-day itinerary incorporated socializing with Deaf community members in Kraków (Poland), Linz (Austria), and Vienna and touring Lebenswelt, a community for Deaf adults with disabilities in Upper Austria. Students attended seminars about interpreters in Mauthausen Concentration Camp (Michaela Wolf, Karl-Franzens University of Graz) and experiences of Deaf people during national socialism (Katharina Schalber, University of Vienna). Travel occurred in Spring 2019, and data collection began 18 months later in Fall 2020.

The organizer and leader of the study abroad became the lead researcher in this study, contextualized by literature on identity construction, study abroad value, camp interpreters, and the “Deaf Holocaust” (Kimura & Hayashi, 2019; Zaurov, 2016, p. 143). Whereas concentration camps were designed to erode personal and social identities (Wolf, 2016), connecting students to Holocaust events was expected to positively impact identity-building (Gómez Amich, 2013). The overarching research question was ‘How did traveling with a group of interpreting students to

Holocaust memorial sites impact your identity as a professional interpreter?' While the research team anticipated lasting impact of this themed study abroad on new and experienced interpreters, the depth of transformation and contribution to identity-building that would directly impact their work was uncertain. The team was keenly interested in learning how such an intensive experiential learning opportunity would manifest itself over time in the lives and work of the students (in this case, approximately 18 months from travel to study implementation).

## METHODS

Our mixed methods design integrated Collier's (1967) photo elicitation technique for stimulating participant narratives about shifting identities (Kohon & Carder, 2014), resilience and coping (Bowling, 2019), and interpersonal communication (Nelson, 2019). Warranted by the cultural, religious, and linguistic complexity inherent to this study, the research team introduced a form of analytical triangulation to organize the data from various frames of reference each researcher brought to the process. Two analysts identified themes and subthemes by manually coding focus group interviews and responses to open-ended survey questions and subsequently compared and reconciled their coding schemes (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Participants verified the accuracy of transcriptions and checked the conclusions for errors that might have misrepresented their narratives. This process of member checking ensured the final report was adequately reflective of the participants' contributions (Orcher, 2005).

## PARTICIPANTS

One of the students who attended the study abroad was a Deaf Education major who became a co-researcher due to her photo elicitation experience as a Fulbright Scholar. Of the remaining ten attendees, nine agreed to participate in the study. Two participants had minimal, or no interpreting experience (22%), and the remainder had more than three years of interpreting experience (78%). Three were nationally certified interpreters (33%, NAD, RID, CASLI), two held a state screening level (22%), two held an EIPA Level 3+ (22%) and two were not credentialed (22%). The university's IRB designated the moderator as a participant because of her unique contributions to the discussions, resulting in a heterogeneous sample ( $n = 10$ ) across age (40% ages 18-26, 40% ages 27-34, 20% ages >35), gender (20% male, 80% female, 0% other), ethnicity (10% Black, 80% White, 10% Other), and religion (20% Jewish, 50% Christian). All participants, aside from the moderator-participant, were hearing, and one was a heritage signer. Discrepancies in categories not totaling 100% are due to undisclosed information.

## MEASURES

The two main data sources were group interviews and a survey containing agreement statements, photo and value rankings, and open-ended questions. The five-point Likert scale used reverse-coded statements to avoid response bias and asked participants to respond without concern for researcher expectations to avoid social desirability bias (see Appendix A for sample questions). Focus groups incorporated 58 photos selected from a photo collection assembled by the participants and faculty co-leaders to invoke memories of the experiences (see Appendix B for sample questions). A final data source was the moderator-participant's summative video of her impressions about the focus group dialogue from a Deaf, Jewish perspective (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mixed Methods Data Sources

Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus group interviews</li> <li>Rationale for photo rankings</li> <li>Open-ended survey questions</li> <li>Moderator-Participant perspectives</li> </ul>
Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likert agreement scale</li> <li>Photo rankings</li> <li>Professional value rankings</li> </ul>

## PROCEDURE

Upon IRB approval, participants self-assigned to focus groups with four or five participants each, and each group met twice. Participants received a preparation packet with photograph batches, mental preparation suggestions, a project overview, and guiding questions. Photo batches were quasi-associated with guiding questions and loosely associated with each other; however, participants were not restricted and could use any photo they identified as meaningful to their responses. The purpose of using photographs was to facilitate recall and help participants organize their thoughts through a visual prompt, which was beneficial considering that 18 months had passed since the students traveled together. The moderator-participant, whose first language is American Sign Language (ASL), and the lead researcher, whose first language is English, co-translated focus group recordings from ASL to English, resolving any discrepancies with each other and respective participants. Whereas ASL signs and English words do not have a one-to-one correspondence, the contextual meanings, rather than word frequency, influenced thematic content analysis.

## QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Thematic analysis of open-ended questions and focus group transcripts produced four themes and seven subthemes across the spectrum of personal, social, and professional identity (see Table 1). Clearly, some data narratives overlap categories, and the coders used their judgment in designating which theme best fit the participant's intended meaning. After analysis, the coding team reviewed unassignable codes to prevent overlooking meaningful data. In this discussion of the prevalent themes, descriptive quotes illustrate how the themes contribute to professional identity-building.

*Table 1: Emergent Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Productive dissonance	Cognitive processing, Challenge confrontation, Values clarification  Self-Efficacy
Communal coping	
Consumer orientation	Responsibility
Justice and equity	Humanness, Intergroup relations

### ***THEME 1: PRODUCTIVE DISSONANCE***

Students who practiced reflexivity about their experiences were demonstrating 'productive dissonance' in response to their internal conflicts (Lee & Williams, 2017). Resounding Mezirow's (2000) transformation process of clarifying meaning after a "disorienting dilemma" (p. 94), dissonance was deemed productive if participants (a) applied critical thinking about the Nazis' chain of logic, (b) overcame disorientation with engagement and risk-taking, and (c) saw equilibrium loss as beneficial to professional growth. Applying critical thinking to perceptions of indifference to Holocaust atrocities, participants realized how propaganda immobilized people into bystanders (Goldberg, 2017), thus concluding that each level of agreement to bad ideas takes a person to new depths of complicity. Participants also grappled with extreme contrasts that demanded self-exploration:

- Schloss Hartheim is a beautiful castle-turned-extermination site. I watched [a peer] count her steps from the unloading platform to the adjacent gas chamber. It was such a short



walk from life to death! Contrast that with people living and working in Lebenswelt, where people with disabilities are considered worthy of living.

- I connect this scenario to Black Lives Matter because one group was valued less than another.
- One leader advocated for exterminating whoever he decided was unworthy based on certain characteristics, and the other accepts people's challenges and figures out the best way to help them live meaningful lives. A leader makes all the difference.
- I wonder whether we sufficiently scrutinize our political, religious, educational, and social leaders.
- Do I passively accept what I am told, or do I critically think about what I am told?

Participants expressed concerns about becoming passive observers to their surroundings. Some students expressed a fear of succumbing to dangerous ideology (Could I let myself be indoctrinated so subtly?). Another participant acknowledged that visiting a Holocaust museum might provoke shock and disbelief, but standing on the Birkenau selection platform makes denying the Holocaust impossible (It didn't get down into the depths of who I am until I was there). One participant suggested disorientation was a challenge to be embraced. Noticeably, participants who paired disequilibrium with positivity, particularly when communicating with Deaf nationals who used different signed languages, were most often the experienced interpreters with more confidence in their language proficiency.

### ***THEME 2: COMMUNAL COPING***

Recurring discussion about group bonding resulted in the emergent theme of 'communal coping' (Zajdel & Helgeson, 2020). Within the group, students created ways to manage their discomfort and distress. Communal coping was most efficient when students explored new cities, shared meals, and talked together; however, some students struggled to cope (I didn't feel I could get it out and that impacted me personally.) Acclimation to new environments and adaptability were common descriptors of communal coping:

- We relied on each other to cope with the sadness of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and our connection resulted in enduring relationships.
- Sometimes, I needed to stop thinking about the trauma and be out with friends. I could stop obsessing about all the things that were so horrible.
- We were like lost sheep [walking through the Kraków ghetto], and I'm reminded how Jewish people must have felt as they were herded into ghettos, camps, and the unknown.
- The photo of our hostel bunks reminds me of trying to find the hostel. It was a bit scary. We were practicing the same kind of flexibility interpreters use to find unfamiliar places.
- Meeting new people and staying in close quarters was great. There was no petty individualism. That really helped me realize the importance of relationships. I know I matured and developed my emotional intelligence.

### ***THEME 3: CONSUMER ORIENTATION***

‘Consumer orientation’ was the label assigned to the students’ application of experiences to relationships with consumers of interpreting services. Participants considered how interpreters negotiate roles and responsibilities and promote equitable outcomes for Deaf constituents:

- It was important for [interpreter] to maintain professionalism even though she was seeing Auschwitz-Birkenau for the first time along with [Deaf co-leader].
- Interpreting in 2020 has become so transactional. Gone are the days when consumers knew the names of their interpreters, where they were from, and their ties to the Deaf community. As wonderful as technology is, interpreting has become more of an assembly line business. There is less opportunity to build relationships with consumers.
- The interpreter’s responsibility is to mediate differences between consumers so Deaf people are not automatically considered inferior. We have to convey that empathic bond while we stay professional. That’s my idea of how the Auschwitz atrocities relate to the work of an interpreter.
- It’s humbling to think that on top of communication barriers, people in the camps didn’t even have basic human necessities. Interpreters in the camps worked in unconventional ways that were atypical of professional interpreters, but the outcomes were equal to other inmates.
- Do I see myself as someone who just gets the job done, or do I make sure the outcome for the Deaf person is as equitable as possible?

Another conversation described the spectator effect on Deaf consumers and concluded that *acting like tourists* in the Deaf community is detrimental to identity-building. One student equated passive observation to a *Deaf zoo*, where students go to learn signs without engaging directly with people. Serendipitous encounters with foreign Deaf signers were described as exhilarating by some and difficult by others:

- It was the highlight of my trip!
- It was the happiest situation in my life, next to becoming a parent!
- I’ve never used drugs, but I was high with happiness.
- I think it’s important to make ourselves vulnerable and learn new skills by taking chances in hard situations. We have to *want* to avoid stagnation. Two people trying to communicate must respect each other’s efforts.
- I am not technically an interpreter, but I wish I had participated more and joined in conversations. I was nervous about my ASL and I lost a lot of opportunities.
- Every day, it was difficult for me to figure out how to communicate.

These final comments correspond to a ‘self-efficacy’ subtheme, which relates to misplacing locus of control onto external conditions or perceptions of inadequacy. Participants who lacked language confidence and who were in the earliest stages of professional identity-building experienced negative self-talk that likely inhibited them from risk-taking, a normal steppingstone toward becoming a professional.

#### ***THEME 4: JUSTICE AND EQUITY***

‘Justice and equity’ permeated several focus group discussions about inequality, ignorance, blind trust, misunderstanding, and complacency. Participants deliberated the meaning of societal value and ways to mitigate inequities related to language, stereotyping, and oppression:

- I can see how colonialism and oppression could stem from not having a common language.
- I had a very small frame of reference. Now, my mind is more open.
- I’m better at asking questions to get more information without judging people.
- Finding what we have in common and what we have experienced differently is important.
- We saw how people were killed for being different from the group in control. If we allow another group to be perceived as non-human, we are on a slippery slope to creating a greater divide between the groups.
- It’s so important that we continue to honor humanity.
- Interpreters cannot function as machines because humanity is involved in every interpreting situation.
- As a future interpreter, I was greatly impacted by watching the different forms of language at Lebenswelt [German, English, ASL, Austrian Sign Language, Lorm alphabet, tactile Austrian Sign Language].
- The Hundertwasserhaus [Vienna] shows the diversity of our profession. The floor isn’t always flat, and walls aren’t always straight. Just like people. And it’s marvelous anyway. There’s not just one way to be right.

The lead researcher conducted a final layer of qualitative analysis on the moderator-participant’s impressions of moderating focus groups from the standpoint of her family’s internment, diaspora, and survival accounts. Her reflections spotlighted the incidental impact that experiential learning of the Holocaust can have on the researchers themselves, as they engage with participants and begin to internally process the data. Personal experiences recalled during focus group facilitation and afterward during data analysis led to a deeper awareness of gaps in her family history and renewed interest in filling these gaps:

I refer to myself as a ‘bad Jew’ because being Deaf has somewhat separated me from my hearing family and stories of relatives who perished in the Holocaust. Some family members barely escaped with their lives and settled in various places around the world. Although my sister and brother had contact with our cousins, my communication barrier left me with little information about our family history. I once asked my sister why the Holocaust survivors in our family did not talk about their experiences with the next generation, and she said it was too painful to ‘re-hash’ the past. Several older cousins bore the evidence of identification numbers tattooed on their left forearms. In retrospect, I wish I had ignored my mother’s warning not to ask questions of the survivors in our family. Participating in this project touched me so deeply and allowed me to dredge up my own family history and renewed my interest in understanding the impact of Holocaust education on the next generation of interpreters.

The moderator expressed three impressions that related to focus group themes: equitable outcomes, language proficiency, and diversity in interpreter education programs. Regarding interpreter-functionaries, she reflected on the impossibility of comparing camp workers to interpreters today and tied her thoughts to the responsibility of interpreters to provide access to

linguistic and environmental information so Deaf people can achieve the same outcomes as hearing people (It's not appropriate for an interpreter to be just 'good enough'. Interpreters are learning to empower Deaf consumers by providing extralinguistic information, like noises and tone of voice). The moderator noted that ASL proficiency is a determinant for equitable outcomes and corresponds with the ability to adapt when confronted with extremely emotional responses to content (An interpreter with more skill can control emotional responses when interpreting traumatic events. Students who are developing ASL proficiency are more likely to let their insecurities inhibit their use of the language. Although not a direct comparison, I think of the Jews whose emotions must have been out of control when they could not understand what was happening). Lastly, the moderator connected the participants' comments to her own perceptions on how interpreter education programs could use study abroad and Holocaust education to diversify student experiences:

Programs could increase the incidence of BIPOC students participating in study abroad by traveling to places that are not primarily populated by White people. I am fascinated by the gestural-visual methods the students used when they met Deaf nationals who used a different signed language. Interpreting programs could apply what these students accomplished by frequently exposing students to a variety of Deaf people whose language falls along a continuum of ASL and English sign systems. Just like the trip leader arranged a network of people to interact with the students, students need a network of Deaf people who influence their language development.

### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Survey responses were analyzed by collapsing *strongly agree* and *somewhat agree* categories (likewise with *strongly disagree* and *somewhat disagree*), revealing that students absolutely agreed (100%) they are (a) more empathic toward people from different backgrounds, (b) better able to apply knowledge to interactions with diverse populations, and (c) more likely to understand alternative perspectives. Whereas some scale items used negative statements, participants disagreed (89%) that the Holocaust information they acquired was inaccurate or that the trip was not beneficial for professional development. Of the 49 statements, nine statements prompted substantive agreement (88-99%):

1. Interacting with people who are Deaf with disabilities was beneficial to me as an interpreter (or future interpreter). [Theme: Justice and Equity]
2. Interacting with local Deaf people was beneficial to me as an interpreter (or future interpreter). [Theme: Consumer Orientation]
3. I am more encouraging to other interpreters who are at a different developmental stage than me. [Theme: Communal Coping]
4. I learned more effective communication strategies for expressing myself to Deaf people. [Theme: Consumer Orientation]
5. I am more committed to promoting equity and social justice at home. [Theme: Justice and Equity]
6. I am a better professional because of my experiences on this trip. [Subtheme: Responsibility]
7. Harthem made me think of the Deaf people or people with disabilities who have influenced who I am. [Theme: Consumer Orientation]

8. This trip helped me mature as a professional. [Subtheme: Responsibility]
9. I still have a lot to learn about working with people from oppressed groups. [Theme: Justice and Equity]

Photo-ranking survey questions prompted participants to rank a series of ten images according to the impact they might have on their work as interpreters. Participants selected five photographs that represented the closest relationship to their professional identity-building. The commentary beside each photo is extrapolated from participants' rationales for selecting highest-ranking photos (see Appendix C).

## **DISCUSSION**

There are three methodological features distinguishing this study from traditional designs in interpreter-related research: moderator-as-participant, photo elicitation, and triangulation strategies. The Deaf, Jewish moderator created a conducive environment for Holocaust dialogue. The various data sources revealed prevalent themes and subthemes that might not have been apparent from a single source. The constant-comparison coding process led to categorization of ~400 codes that yielded rich description to answer the guiding question: 'How did traveling with a group of interpreting students to Holocaust memorial sites impact your identity as a professional interpreter?' Using photographs as research tools was an appropriate technique for eliciting profoundly sensitive conversations, particularly on topics of complicity, human rights, and communication equity. Without the photographs, it might have been difficult to stimulate the deep personal analysis achieved by the participants in this study.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Results should be applied cautiously, as they represent perceptions of one student group and are not generalizable to other groups, times, or situations. Nevertheless, the findings align with transformational learning theorists and confirm that participants effectively questioned their pre-established belief systems and restored their equilibrium according to the new values they identified as most critical to their work (e.g., adaptability, stamina, empathy, and honoring another person's humanity). Participants highlighted ways they were transformed through stretching their language and cultural abilities, adapting to traumatic realities, and acquiring fresh perspectives of their own roles and responsibilities from a social justice perspective. The group's solidarity speaks volumes about the importance of community for tackling difficult subjects like racism. Participants extended their experiences to a desire for equitable outcomes for Deaf people in their local communities, prompting interpreter educators to tie social justice training exercises to the Deaf people students already know, gradually widening the circumference of community outreach to marginalized populations.

Interpreter educators can use international travel to encourage critical thinking about historically relevant topics, and with adequate institutional infrastructure, they can build travel itineraries around the features that most impacted our participants, such as interacting with Deaf nationals and adapting to unfamiliar environments and cultures. Furthermore, the findings about (non)productive dissonance illuminated connections between self-estimation of language proficiency and deliberate disengagement that caused regret over lost opportunities. Students who saw themselves as trainees rather than up-and-coming interpreters were less likely to

experiment with visual communication strategies when opportunities arose. Future faculty leaders should learn from these student disclosures and emphasize, perhaps as part of pre-travel screening, the expectation for visual language creativity at every opportunity and adherence to Deaf cultural norms through full participation.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

Holocaust education is largely unaddressed and under-researched within interpreter education, whether in academia or in professional development venues. To expand upon this study's findings, international collaborations between spoken and signed language researchers could explore the most effective means of utilizing Holocaust education to stimulate language proficiency and ethical decision-making around social justice topics. An international research partnership would establish a concentrated research agenda regarding vital humanities issues such as eugenics, group supremacy, Holocaust denial, and the dehumanization of others. Collaborative researchers could design methods of inquiry that produce generalizable findings that are widely applicable to spoken and signed language interpreting students. Future studies that measure student perceptions at distinct intervals of Holocaust learning (prior to travel, immediately upon return, six months, and 18 months post-travel) may yield information about how study abroad continues to impact identity development well into the interpreter's career. Cross-sectional studies with larger samples could broaden our understanding of how interpreting students develop professionalism through travel. Anti-Semitic and other discriminatory influences on college campuses make this study a call for action, particularly as programs and institutions determine strategies for addressing social inequities.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the relevance of Holocaust education to contemporary issues is apparent; however, acquiring knowledge is not the same as applying knowledge to one's own identity, values, and belief systems. Auschwitz-Birkenau is a powerful symbol of man's inhumanity to man, and accountability for acknowledging its societal repercussions rests with the current generation, as the survivor population rapidly diminishes. Measuring the impact of the Auschwitz symbolism on interpreters as they construct professional identities is undoubtedly complicated, and this study produced a mere glimpse of transformation that cannot be observed fully by researchers. Perhaps, participants in this study will challenge social inequities and mistreatment of people with physical and mental differences and become agents of change, displaying their transformed identities in ways that will positively impact human rights within the profession. The four themes of Justice and Equity, Communal Coping, Productive Dissonance, and Consumer Orientation especially should resonate with interpreter educators and mentors, given their responsibility to address prejudice, stereotypes, racism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination within their programs or professional development activities with emerging interpreters.

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## APPENDIX A

### Sample Survey Instructions and Questions

#### Sample 1: Rank Order Question for Participant-Generated Photos

##### *Introduction*

As you know, images are powerful tools for stimulating deep thought. Not only can you remember where the photos were taken, but you might also recall a powerful 'gut' response to them (positive or negative). Think about that initial response, why you felt that way, and the impact that response might have on working with consumers who do not share a common language.

##### *Directions*

Rank the three photos that are *most relevant* to your roles and responsibilities as cultural and linguistic brokers between parties who do not share a language. (1 = most relevant)

- Click and drag the photos to the 1, 2, and 3 positions.
- Leave the remaining photos unranked.

##### *Sample Response*

“An image of the open fields at Birkenau, where hundreds of barracks used to stand, made me think that we were only scratching the surface of what really happened there. The missing barracks made me think of the erased stories of over 1 million people who perished at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This photo would be ranked as *most relevant* for me because the stories (lived realities) within each person are valuable, and interpreters need to honor each person according to that value.”

##### *Photo Descriptions*

1. Suitcases (briefcases) with identifying information about owner
2. Razor wire and electric fencing separating barracks at Auschwitz
3. Birkenau Memorial plaque (“Forever let this place be a cry of despair and a warning to humanity.”)
4. Functionary living quarters (possibly interpreters)
5. Destroyed crematoria at Birkenau

#### Sample Question 2: Coping Strategies

Which of the following strategies did you use to manage your emotions during the trip?

**Directions**

Check all that apply.

- Talking with other participants
- Talking with co-leaders
- Contacting someone at home
- Journaling
- Withdrawing from the group to think
- Doing something social with other participants (pubs, restaurants, malls, etc.)
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

**Sample Question 3: Value-Related Images****Directions**

Write a professional, value-related caption for each photo with a descriptive noun or noun phrase.

**Sample Response**

An image of scaffolding around Karlskirche, might generate a caption like this: “interpreter maintenance (staying current and upgrading skills regularly)”

**Sample Question 4: Fundamental Values**

Which of these fundamental values of professional interpreters were impacted by your participation in this trip? (Check all that changed or developed during OR since the trip.)

- Trustworthiness
- Integrity
- Ethical decision-making
- Sense of purpose
- Self-confidence about interpreting skill
- Self-confidence about knowledge
- Empathy
- Appreciation for diversity
- Respect for colleagues
- Respect for consumers
- Resilience
- Adaptability
- Coping strategies
- Social awareness
- Perseverance and stamina
- Communication equity
- Communicative expertise
- Sense of belonging to community of practice

- Open-mindedness
- Self-regulation of work
- Dependability
- Goal orientation
- ASL competence
- Work-play balance
- Risk taking
- Lifelong learning
- Cultural competence
- Conflict resolution
- Function within collectivist cultural norms

### Sample Question 5: Identity Development Likert Scale

#### *Directions*

Please take a few minutes to honestly evaluate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Do not be concerned about answers you think would be expected. It is critical that you express exactly what you think. All statements assume connection to the study abroad trip (strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree).

- . Interacting with people who are Deaf Plus at Lebenswelt Schenkenfelden was beneficial to me as an interpreter (or future interpreter).
- . Interacting with local Deaf people was beneficial to me as an interpreter (or future interpreter)
- . I see the correspondence between what I experienced and the political climate in the U.S.
- . I feel close to the people who traveled with me because of our shared experience.
- . I would recommend my experience to other interpreting students.
- . I would not choose to attend this study abroad if I could decide again.
- . The experience motivated me to study more about the impact of radical ideologies on people.
- . Over the past 18 months, I have become more aware of oppression around me.
- . I am a better professional because of my experiences on this study abroad.
- . The study abroad helped me mature as a professional.
- . I regret not preparing myself more for the study abroad.
- . I am more empathic toward people from different backgrounds.
- . I learned how to behave for the good of the group rather than according to my own preferences.
- . I am more encouraging to other interpreters who are at a different developmental stage than me.

## APPENDIX B

### Focus Group Sample Questions

#### Sample Question 1

The itinerary started with a visit to Schenkenfelden to experience the daily lives of Deaf people with disabilities in a supportive community, and the next day we went to Schloss Hartheim Euthanasia Center. What were your reflections about the contrast between them?

#### Sample Question 2

How did Schloss Hartheim impact your thinking about deaf oppression, deaf repression, and social justice during the time period? Was there any relationship between what happened there and what happens today?

#### Sample Question 3

Did anything that happened at Schloss Hartheim impact your thinking as an interpreter (or other professional) over the last 18 months?

#### Sample Question 4

[referring to a collage of photos in which the interpreter is interacting or interpreting with the Deaf co-leader]

At Auschwitz-Birkenau, you observed your Deaf co-leader and the designated interpreter interacting while simultaneously processing what they were seeing for the first time. Do you recall anything thought-provoking you observed?

Professional interpreter values include integrity, ethics, and confidence in one's knowledge and skills. We know that professional and personal values overlap, so as you look at the relational dynamics of [Deaf Co-Leader] and [designated interpreter] in these photos, describe an image that relates to professional interpreter values.

#### Sample Question 5

How do you think interacting with the Linz, Vienna, and Kraków Deaf communities in planned and unplanned encounters impacted you as an interpreter?

#### Sample Question 6

[referring to a collage of photos from Kraków and Auschwitz-Birkenau]

Describe your coping strategies at Auschwitz-Birkenau and discuss how these strategies might be used or refined in your interpreting work.

**Sample Question 7**

Please identify a photo or collage of photos that relates to skills, knowledge, or values needed by a professional interpreter and explain the relationship between the photo/collage and those characteristics.



**Sample Question 8**

How would you describe the personal and professional value of a study abroad to concentration camps for interpreters with a group of interpreting students?


APPENDIX C

Highest Ranking Photographs for Professional Impact

Photograph and Description	Student Rationale for High Photo Ranking	Ranking %
<p>/Birkenau Memorial Plaques in 22 Languages</p> <p>“Forever let this place be a cry of despair and a warning to humanity where the Nazis murdered about one and a half million men, women, and children mainly Jews from various countries of Europe, 1940-1945.”</p>	<p>The Birkenau memorial plaque is the call, it's the warning to humanity of the dangers of "otherness". When working, as a majority group member, with someone "like us" (hearing) and someone "different" (Deaf), we have a responsibility to ensure equity and humanity in both parties. It is my responsibility to do what the multiple plaques do: provide the same message in every language. While standing in a horrible place, [the plaques] still emphasize that different people were affected by the massacre and provide their language to help them feel some sort of connection.</p> <p>[Themes: Justice and Equity; Responsibility]</p>	<p><b>Rank 1, 30%</b></p> <p><b>Rank 2, 30%</b></p> <p>Rank 3, 30%</p> <p>Rank 4, 10%</p> <p>Rank 5, 0%</p>
<div data-bbox="279 1041 594 1459" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Auschwitz: Warning in German and Polish</p>	<p>I selected the bilingual sign because it reminds me that good and evil are not monolingual. They are not bound by language, culture, or ethnic group. First and foremost, the goal of every interpreting assignment is communication access in the consumer's preferred language. [The Nazis] thought it was important that prisoners understand the warning of STOP! Therefore, they made it accessible in two languages.</p> <p>[Subtheme: Responsibility]</p>	<p><b>Rank 1, 40%</b></p> <p><b>Rank 2, 20%</b></p> <p>Rank 3, 0%</p> <p>Rank 4, 20%</p> <p>Rank 5, 20%</p>

Photograph and Description	Student Rationale for High Photo Ranking	Ranking %
 <p data-bbox="217 705 610 737">Auschwitz: Gallery of Inmates</p>	<p data-bbox="716 333 1325 621">These people died for countless reasons, but some of them died because they were not able to communicate in the language that was required of them. As an interpreter, it is important to think about [consumer] perspectives, both hearing and Deaf... We need to walk their steps and see through their eyes in order to interpret to the best of our abilities.</p> <p data-bbox="716 663 1292 737">[Themes: Consumer Orientation; Justice and Equity]</p>	<p data-bbox="1360 333 1544 365"><b>Rank 1, 30%</b></p> <p data-bbox="1360 407 1544 438"><b>Rank 2, 20%</b></p> <p data-bbox="1360 480 1528 512">Rank 3, 40%</p> <p data-bbox="1360 554 1511 585">Rank 4, 0%</p> <p data-bbox="1360 627 1528 659">Rank 5, 10%</p>
 <p data-bbox="217 1188 691 1220">Birkenau Entrance: Unloading Ramp</p>	<p data-bbox="716 774 1325 1167">Knowing how many people entered on those train tracks to face a gas chamber or certain death by work, starvation, disease, or weather helps to promise oneself that such a heinous act can never happen again. The untimely death of millions of people on the generalized basis of inferiority is morally awful... It is entirely our responsibility to have conversations on morality and to discuss in great detail the reality of such atrocities present even today.</p> <p data-bbox="716 1209 1081 1241">[Theme: Justice and Equity]</p>	<p data-bbox="1360 774 1544 806"><b>Rank 1, 10%</b></p> <p data-bbox="1360 848 1544 879"><b>Rank 2, 40%</b></p> <p data-bbox="1360 921 1511 953">Rank 2, 0%</p> <p data-bbox="1360 995 1528 1026">Rank 3, 20%</p> <p data-bbox="1360 1068 1511 1100">Rank 5, 0%</p>



Photograph and Description	Student Rationale for High Photo Ranking	Ranking %
 <p data-bbox="215 884 602 915">Auschwitz: Personal Luggage</p>	<p data-bbox="719 338 1289 443">It's unimaginable how many people gave up their belongings to be standing naked and killed in gas chambers.</p> <p data-bbox="719 485 1308 621">Those briefcases had owners. They had a face and a family. As interpreters, we should value each person regardless of status. Every person has value and should be treated as such.</p> <p data-bbox="719 663 1081 695">[Theme: Justice and Equity]</p>	<p data-bbox="1362 338 1544 369"><b>Rank 1, 40%</b></p> <p data-bbox="1362 411 1528 443"><b>Rank 2, 0%</b></p> <p data-bbox="1362 485 1528 516">Rank 3, 20%</p> <p data-bbox="1362 558 1528 590">Rank 4, 40%</p> <p data-bbox="1362 632 1511 663">Rank 5, 0%</p>