

Simulating Survival

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Counterfeit and reproduction imply always an anguish, a disquieting foreignness. . . .

—Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*

INTRODUCTION

I first heard about Katie Bess's¹ teaching of the Holocaust from a former student of hers who had become a student of mine. The student, a young Jewish girl entering 10th grade at the time, told me that it was the "coolest" class she had ever taken. The ninth-graders taking the class "played Jews," and the 10th graders who had taken the class the year before came back to play "the Gestapo." The teacher was a "kind of Hitler," directing everything that happened in the room. The teacher had conducted a Holocaust simulation, and for this student the experience was emotionally powerful. She claimed that she would never forget it. I remember thinking at the time that in all probability this student had indeed had a powerful learning experience, but that it must have come at the expense of trivializing the Holocaust. I thought then that no simulation, no matter how well done, could avoid that significant pitfall. How, after all, could a classroom encounter that didn't include *actual* barbarity, physical, emotional, and spiritual, mimic Holocaust atrocity authentically? How could the finality of mass murder be conveyed to students in a meaningful way, without bastardizing its deepest and most personal consequences?

What Thomas Laqueur (1994) lamented about the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC resonated with the reservations I held about classroom simulations of the Holocaust:

Any simulacrum [of the Holocaust] would be unspeakably vulgar. The social history museum in Victoria uses odors of apple brown betty wafting from its model of a nineteenth-century kitchen to give us the feel of the times; but what might one do for Treblinka? It would be unthinkable to crowd visitors [to the Holocaust Memorial Museum], a hundred at a go, into the real cattle car which sits on a few

feet of track on Floor Three in order to “experience” what “it felt like.” . . . [To mimic] smells, sounds, “experiences”—screams, hissing of gas, screeching of train brakes, barking of dogs, bursts of machine-gun fire, shouts—would be unbearable. (1994, p. 31)

I interpret Laqueur here to eschew such simulacra for being not only aesthetically repugnant, but morally unbearable as well, or perhaps, aesthetically distasteful precisely because of their moral implications. To aestheticize the Holocaust was originally offensive to Theodor Adorno;² to simulate it experientially might be to reduce it *ad absurdum* to kitsch (Mosse, 1990, p. 8), Disneyland, or blockbuster (“reality”) television.

Similar concerns, I suspect, underlie Samuel Totten and William Parson’s (1994) warning against enacting Holocaust simulations. “Even when teachers take great care to prepare a class for such an activity,” they write in the guidelines section of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s *Resource Book for Educators*, “simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound.” As they explain:

The problem with trying to simulate situations from the Holocaust is that complex events and actions are oversimplified, and students are left with a skewed view of history. Since there are numerous primary source accounts, both written and visual, as well as survivors and eyewitnesses who can describe actual choices faced and made by individuals, groups, and nations during this period, teachers should draw upon these resources and refrain from simulation games that lead to trivialization of the subject matter. (1994, p. 8)

In a later article devoted exclusively to dissuading teachers from enacting simulations, Samuel Totten (2000, p. 170) goes so far as to suggest that teachers who use simulations are not only “minimizing, simplifying, [and] distorting” the Holocaust, but “possibly even ‘denying’” it, that is, aiding Holocaust deniers who dispute its very facticity. According to Totten, then, simulating the Holocaust is a form of trivializing it akin to denying it.

Whereas this last claim seems to me egregious in its dismissal of the importance of intention and the nature of evidence, I nonetheless used to share with Totten, Parsons, Laqueur, and others who decry simulations central assumptions about them and about what it means to “trivialize” the Holocaust (Dawidowicz, 1992; Wiesel, 1990). These assumptions may be classified in two intricately related categories of curriculum, what might be called: the symbolic (or representational) dimensions and the consequential ones. The first set is primarily concerned with the image of the subject matter, specifically its representation in classrooms. The consequential category centers on the domain of actual human impact or what students learn.³

The representational assumptions tend to run this way: classroom simulations, as representations of the Holocaust, inevitably trivialize the subject matter; by virtue of their format alone, simulations fundamentally pervert Holocaust history. The form of a simulation warps its historical

referent. By treating tragic subject matter as a “game,” by making it “fun” for students to learn, by leavening the heavy history of this era, one compromises or diminishes the seriousness of the events themselves. Put differently, according to these assumptions, the Holocaust is inherently tragic, tragedy demands reverence or at least a seriousness of venue through which to study it. By contrast, simulations are inherently irreverent if not outright farcical, and they are thus an inappropriate medium through which to teach about tragic events. They trivialize by compromising verisimilitude, the very feature they depend on for validity. It is the conflation of contradictory genres, in a sense—the tragedy of the Holocaust itself and any nontragic representation of it—which becomes aesthetically and morally “vulgar.” Harking back to debates over the limits of historical representation, this line of argument calls forth what Hayden White (1992) first identified as “unacceptable modes of emplotment in considering a period such as the Nazi epoch and events such as the ‘Final Solution’” (p. 39). Simply put, the claim is that the classroom figuring of the Holocaust ought to match its historical narrative.

Given this first set of assumptions, it follows that students participating in a simulation run the risk of learning about the Holocaust *as* its trivialized form. This is the consequentialist claim. Students risk coming to think that what they have simulated is a close replica of the historical reality rather than a distant, distorted echo, only partially intelligible. As Totten (2000) articulates the position, “For students to walk away [from a simulation experience] thinking that they have either experienced what a victim went through or have a greater understanding of what the victims suffered is shocking in its naiveté” (p. 170).

As I see it, there is in fact an important distinction between the two phrases Totten couples and seems to object to with equal vigor. “For students to walk away thinking that they have . . . experienced what a victim went through” seems to me indeed to constitute historical “naiveté” as Totten suggests; for students to gain “a greater understanding of what the victims suffered,” by contrast, seems to me a laudable goal, a flexing of the muscles required for developing sophisticated historical imaginations. Whereas the former leads to hubris, the latter leads, at least potentially, to humility in the face of this history, hopefully even to wisdom in considering all historical events. Totten’s coupling, however misleading in its substance, is nonetheless illustrative of the tight linkage between representational and consequentialist assumptions. The fear is that a Holocaust simulation necessarily collapses the important distinctions between the experiences of Holocaust victims/survivors and present-day students, desensitizing students to those very real differences and allowing a “shocking naiveté” to masquerade as “greater understanding” of Holocaust atrocity. The mismatch of genres (the representational problem) trivializes the Holocaust, leading to a miseducative experience for students (the consequentialist problem).

According to Sam Wineburg (1990), all endeavors in history education inevitably encounter the tension between the knowable and the unknowable as it is woven into the very fabric of the discipline. In his words:

Coming to know others, whether they live on the other side of the tracks or the other side of the millennium, requires the education of our sensibilities, [and] that is what history, when taught well, gives us practice in doing. Paradoxically, what allows us to come to know others is our distrust of our capacity to know them, a skepticism toward the extraordinary sense-making abilities that allow us to construct the world around us. (1990, p. 499)

In sum, the consequentialist position, as articulated by Totten, claims that the precarious balance of understanding, toward which all history education ought aspire according to Wineburg, is necessarily sabotaged by a simulation. In having students role-play the parts of historical actors, simulations encourage students to elide the tremendous disparities in worldview and circumstance between survivors/victims and themselves.

Of course, there are other dimensions to each of these categories (as well as other kinds of arguments altogether) that may be levied against the use of Holocaust simulations. Anxiety over the possibility of harming students psychologically, for example, is a consequentialist claim that deserves mention. In role-playing the part of victims, are students not in some way psychically victimized themselves, temporarily or not? Worse yet, what happens to students who participate in those simulations where they play the part of victimizers? Are they not encouraged, again at least temporarily, to imagine themselves the perpetrators of brutal acts, and does that not carry implications for their behavior outside of the classroom walls? In addition, how might such role-playing affect students' perceptions of Jews? Regardless of whether they are Jewish themselves, will the students come to think of Jews primarily as victims? Considering the impressive literature on the impact of role-taking on image-making, or action on thought (Zimbardo, Maslach, & Haney, 2000; Jones, 1981; Peters, 1971), it is clear that the psychological dimensions of simulations are not trivial matters.

The conviction that the Holocaust itself is unintelligible, unrepresentable, and that it exceeds the single human's capacity for imagination is primarily a representational issue, though it, too, bears consequential implications. Articulated by scholars such as Elie Wiesel (1990) and Arthur Cohen (1974), this claim, taken to its extreme, shrouds the Holocaust in an impenetrable veil, obviating any attempt at Holocaust education, whether in the form of a simulation or not. After all, if the Holocaust is fundamentally and profoundly unknowable, teaching about it is bound to fail. As others have elegantly argued (Bauer, 2000; Novick, 1999), a fetishism with the uniqueness of the Holocaust undergirds this "mystification" of its victims' and survivors' suffering. Yehudah Bauer (2000) disputes the claims of this orientation with sympathy and straightforwardness.

True, the depth of pain and suffering of Holocaust victims is difficult to describe, and writers, artists, poets, dramatists and philosophers will forever grapple with the problem of articulating it—and as far as this is concerned, the Holocaust is certainly not unique, because “indescribable” human suffering is forever there and is forever being described. (2000, p. 7)

Bauer is careful to qualify that “this does not mean that the explanation [for the Holocaust] is easy” (p. 8), only that the events themselves are fundamentally explicable. Hence, the Holocaust is also representable, despite the considerable obstacles involved (Freidlander, 1997). In a very real sense, however, this symbolic objection is somewhat irrelevant to the enterprise of education. To teach about the Holocaust necessitates its representation, no matter how compromised.

The questions revolving around Holocaust simulations thus converge in the following constellation of symbolic and consequential queries: Might it be possible for a simulation to represent the Holocaust without trivializing it? Could a well-crafted simulation impart to students a strong knowledge base about the Holocaust, a heightened sensitivity to historical contingency, and a greater empathy for its actors? Under such circumstances, would the consequentialist achievements override the symbolist objections?

From January to June 1997, I conducted research on Ms. Bess’s Holocaust simulation. I observed, took notes, and tape-recorded every class session. I interviewed Ms. Bess and a small group of select students three to four times each, transcribing and coding all of these interviews.⁴ I collected and analyzed all class materials and all of these students’ work for class. I also surveyed all the students in the class before the course began and after it concluded. Using Elliot Eisner’s educational criticism (1991), I constructed the case of Ms. Bess.

I should restate that rather than entering Ms. Bess’s classroom with an open mind, I was mostly sure of my answers and was seeking empirical support for my claims. As a Jewish woman with direct, personal ties to this history, I was dedicated to my skepticism about Holocaust simulations. Since hearing about Ms. Bess from my former student, I had been referred to her numerous times by educators, researchers, and district administrators, many of whom gave me her name somewhat cautiously, saying she was an “excellent history teacher” but that her treatment of the Holocaust was “controversial.”

In the following pages, I describe in detail the Holocaust simulation Ms. Bess conducted, paying special attention to what students learned as it proceeded. At the conclusion of the analytic description, I reflect on the case, using both representational and consequentialist lenses. I then propose a theory for drawing distinctions between powerful and destructive simulations, which poses implications for revising educational policy, particularly the *Teaching Guidelines* published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (Parsons & Totten, 1994).

BACKGROUND

Gaucha High School, where Ms. Bess teaches, sits high on a hillside overlooking the ocean. Surrounding it are tree-lined streets, well-manicured lawns, and the tidy houses of a mostly white, middle-class suburban neighborhood. Although the view from the street is one of suburban serenity, the view behind the school's main building is very different. Gaucha's student population outgrew its main facility by the late-1950s and most classes now are held in nine "portable" buildings that sprouted seemingly haphazardly from concrete fields sprawling behind the school. A few faded murals adorn the windowless walls of the portables, but for the most part the space between structures is punctuated by teachers' cars parked alongside their classrooms' entry ramps. An occasional tree brightens the landscape, and constant police presence quells any hints of unrest. As Ms. Bess describes it, Gaucha is a wonderful public school despite the ugliness of its plant, "the best school in the district by far."

It's a very liberal, progressive, PC [politically correct] kind of high school. There are no gangs; kids are polite to one another. But basically there's social segregation—kids hang out with kids that look like they do, but that's something, I think, that's part of high school.

Gaucha serves 1,400 students, with fewer than 10 percent being limited-English proficient. Despite the school's mostly white and suburban surroundings, Gaucha's student population consists mostly of African-American, inner-city youth bused from the neighboring city. In 1995–1996, the school district reported the following ethnic distribution at Gaucha: African American, 45.81 percent; Caucasian, 23.18 percent; Asian, 19.73 percent; Hispanic, 8.65 percent; and Filipino, 2.43 percent.

Ms. Bess is a tall woman whose attractive face and dancer's physique make her age unidentifiable. She has been teaching history at Gaucha for 24 years, and she has taught about the Holocaust since 1973, a time when few published Holocaust curricula existed and few teachers taught the subject in public schools. Over the years, her teaching of the subject has evolved dramatically, though her goals have remained mostly unchanged. As she explained to me:

What initially years ago made me want to try something different was that I had kids say, "Well *I* would have hid," or "That wouldn't have happened to me." I was sort of outraged that they were so cold-hearted. . . . I realized that they don't understand evil, and they don't understand the circumstances, the play of the hand that history deals, not just in the Holocaust, but it happens a lot, *a lot*. And, you don't have many choices. Initially that's what I wanted. I wanted them to be humbled, and I wanted them to—I didn't ever want to hear a kid say that to me again.

Implied in Ms. Bess's wording are a few of the goals she had for student learning, namely, that students would investigate the historical circum-

stances of the Holocaust, clarify their values, and gain humility in the face of that tragedy. In a sense, it was the very seriousness of the subject matter that encouraged her to experiment with its form. Personalizing this history through a simulation model, she felt, would help humble her students.

Ms. Bess developed her simulation out of initial encounters with an experiential board game entitled *Gestapo: A Learning Experience about the Holocaust* (Zwerin, Marcus, & Kramish, 1976) and over the years its form has changed radically. Ms. Bess moved the simulation from her ninth-grade World History class to her full-semester, upper-level history elective and, unlike the simulation experienced by my 10th grader, the one I observed didn't involve previous years' students playing Gestapo agents. Although her simulation no longer resembled the board game and no one played the part, the name *Gestapo* had stuck.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The simulation was one part of the elective history course Ms. Bess taught on World War II, a very popular class open to 10th, 11th, and 12th graders. In addition to *Gestapo*, the course included five chronologically ordered units of study that Ms. Bess had titled: The Road to War, The Happy Times of the Axis, America Fights the Good War, The Tide turns for the Allies, and Final Reckoning. Each unit was fact-filled, and each student was given a list of terms that he or she had to fill out as a guide through the units.

Many of the students had chosen this elective class because they had had Ms. Bess as a teacher the year before and appreciated her innovative pedagogy. As one student, James, explained, "She's cool," elaborating that "she takes different approaches to stuff than usual teachers will." By this, James meant that her classes were "real interactive . . . [which] makes you understand more; you're not just lookin' in books, read about Adolf Hitler, write a sentence."

As her course description promised and this student expected, Ms. Bess did use a "wide variety of teaching methods . . . to make this history class challenging, informative and fun." Because of Gaucho's block scheduling, the class met five days a week for one and a half hours each day, and on average, Ms. Bess changed activity formats five times every class session. Additionally, during the three months the course met, Ms. Bess spent almost all of her lunch hours showing extra credit movies set in the World War II era.

Ms. Bess's windowless room lent itself to the showing of movies and videos, and when the lights weren't out, the wall-to-wall posters brightened its interior. Ms. Bess had literally covered her classroom's concrete walls from floor to ceiling with graphic images. Only the front wall contained some blank space in the form of three blackboards, aligned side by side.

Three tables spanned the space in front of the boards, and Ms. Bess had materials splayed out all over them. I sat at the front of the class in the farthest right-hand corner, boxes of magazines stacked near my feet. Ms. Bess's teaching assistant, a senior at Gaucho, often sat behind the table farthest from me, quietly correcting students' work.

Ms. Bess had selected Studs Terkel's anthology, *The Good War* (1984), to serve as the students' main resource outside of class. The assigned readings were short, most of the time under five pages, and all illuminated some war experience from the point of view of an individual. As the course proceeded, I came to view this choice of text as emblematic of one of the strengths of Ms. Bess's simulation as a whole. In reading Terkel's book, the individual threads of each personal narrative wove together into the textured pattern of collective history, an interplay that characterized the entirety of Ms. Bess's course.

The students' homework, usually based on the readings, had two parts. The front side of the worksheet involved amassing details from the reading and using them to construct what Ms. Bess called "truths" but what might be alternatively called historical "generalizations." On the backside, students were asked to express themselves about the reading any way they chose—in poetry, artwork, music, prose, and so forth.

Each of the five units in her course ended with a cumulative test. Though Ms. Bess's teaching was highly content-driven, she did not emphasize memorization. The students were allowed to bring to their exams one index card full of information and certain other documents that might be useful to them, such as maps of Europe they had color-coded. All tests, homework assignments, and in-class work were allotted a certain number of points, which were tallied at the end of the term. Assignments typically varied from 10 to 100 points depending on their labor intensity, and "over 800 points of work" were assigned during the semester as a whole.

The simulation wove through the course, making surprise appearances. At almost any time during class, except during a quiz or test, Ms. Bess would cue the students, saying, "Ok, put away your papers, clear your desks; we're now going back to [1933]. . . ."

SIMULATION SET-UP

Ms. Bess started the simulation during the second week of the course. On Monday, she handed out playing cards, one to each student. "Starting on Tuesday," she announced, "I'd like you to declare something." She continued:

Some of you are going to take one or two cherished ones with you [on our simulation], but there's no fair way to do it [to decide who gets to take more than one person along]. Of course I'm not talking about really taking someone along,

because we can't do that. What I'm describing is an imaginative journey. But you know what? I have kids who tell me, "Ms. Bess, I feel like I'm back there." . . . It's important for you to think about who you'd like to bring. And it's important for you to be traveling with someone you love.

At this point, James Rosano, a talkative and opinionated football player of Italian descent, interjected, "Mushroom," joking with Ms. Bess by implying that she'd want to take along her dog, whose photograph adorned the front wall. "Another *person*," Ms. Bess emphasized in response. Those students whose cards were marked with a black dot, it turned out, could take with them two "Cherished Ones" instead of just one, as Ms. Bess wanted the total number of students and Cherished Ones participating in the simulation to equal 60, an even 100,000th of six million. "You'll be living in Germany, and you'll make up only a very small minority of the population, . . . only 1% of the population,"⁵ Ms. Bess explained, continuing, "Take a moment now and think about who you'd like to take with you on this journey."

Ms. Bess then asked random students in the class whom they would "take along." James reported that he'd take his "mom and dad"; another boy in the class was planning on bringing his "sweetheart." Other students joked that they'd like to take Pamela Anderson (the buxom TV star) or Whoopi Goldberg (the comedic actress). "It's gotta be someone you know," Ms. Bess chastised with some humor in her voice. Ms. Bess then handed out a form for the students to fill out overnight; on it, they had to write their own names, birthdays, and the names of one or two people, "(family or close friends) . . . that [they] CHERISH," along with their ages and the nature of their relationships to the students.

To prepare the students for the simulation, Ms. Bess handed each a packet of information sheets; "The Rules of *Gestapo*" was followed by a list of "Common Jobs Held before WWII," a "Holocaust Census," and a "*Gestapo* Terms List." On the last page, a list of 25 terms stood waiting to be defined, terms such as: typhus, Krakow Ghetto, Dr. Joseph Mengele, Auschwitz, and *Kapo*. For all their unit tests and the final exam, the students would also need to know information about the characters they were simulating, information they were to record in the columns of the "Holocaust Census" chart: the age, name, relation to class member, "dead or alive," and "exactly how this person died or survived." The font of these column headings was gothic, the letters of an old English script meant to recall medieval German. The "Common Jobs" list was included to help students choose professions for themselves and their Cherished Ones.

The top sheet, the Rules sheet, was the most informative. Ms. Bess expected the students to have read it by class the next day. I quote the text of this sheet almost in full as it conveys a sense of what was to come in the simulation, as well as some of Ms. Bess's reasons for doing it.

Very soon your class will begin participating in a simulation called *Gestapo*. I have written this simulation so you can connect more personally and emotionally to the infamous World War II event known as the **Holocaust** where over six million Jews were murdered between 1933 and 1945. You will learn how the philosophy and practice of racial hatred shattered the lives of millions of Jews living in Europe. Very simply, you and your cherished friends and family members will embrace the fate of Jews who tried to survive the planned extermination of their culture. In each of our 5 units, we will “return” to history as Jews and learn what happened to us in each year we are studying. . . . Sometimes, the simulation will last 5 minutes or 2 continuous days! You will never know in advance when we are “playing” *Gestapo*. Did Jews living before and during the war know what to expect? Below are a list of rules for how this simulation is conducted.

. . . Soon you will receive an envelope with the names, ages, and numbers of you and your cherished ones. Memorize your numbers! This envelope serves another purpose. Every day we “play” *Gestapo*, class will begin with what is called ROLL CALL. The purpose of this kinesthetic activity is to “test” the luck and health of you and your cherished ones. The rule is that the last person to complete roll call (find your envelope) will be punished appropriately according to the year we are “living” in. **Never take your envelope out of class.**

. . . Since all Jews were required to carry ID, you must bring the ID of you and your cherished ones to class every day. This number must be easily seen by me. Failure to have your ID will mean that you or a cherished one will be punished. Once you and your cherished ones are dead, then you no longer need to present this ID.

. . . Every day *Gestapo* is simulated and you are in class on time, you will earn from 2–10 points. This applies even if you are dead. . . . If you are absent, then you cannot earn any points that day. Sorry! . . . This activity is worth a total of 100 points.

. . . You may find it advantageous to bring money to class. The most money you can bring is **50 cents**. Jews were routinely assessed fines. Sometimes, the ability to bribe an official meant the difference between life and death. Failure to pay a fine could have serious consequences for you or a cherished one. The only units of currency that the “Germans” will accept are **dimes**.

. . . **IF YOU DIE**, then 20 points will be subtracted from your total grade. So . . . you should complete a one hour homework assignment worth 20 points. It is due the following school day [after you’ve died]. Even if you die, you may still earn a grade of “A”. Here’s how: Have perfect attendance every day *Gestapo* happens, [and] complete your “dead” homework on time.

. . . Assuming your attendance is perfect and you are never the last in roll call, then how can you or a cherished one die? A number of factors are involved. They include your age, the decisions you will be asked to make during the simulation, your failure to wear your ID or a Star of David arm band, your inability to pay money if so ordered, the dice number you roll, or an ID number chosen randomly from a jar.

. . . **If you “survive” the Holocaust**, you may take 15 free questions on the final exam. Your envelope will join my wall of survivors. If a cherished one survives, then you may take 10 free questions on the final. . . .

. . . I hope you will find this different approach to learning more interesting and more powerful than other teaching strategies. This is not a game. We’re simulating a nightmare that millions of people had to endure for years. Please don’t lose your respect for humanity and suffering. There is never anything funny about racism and mass murder. It is my hope that you will practice empathy. Empathy is putting oneself in another person’s shoes and practicing empathy means listening not only with the head but with the heart. I think learning empathy is the most effective weapon you can carry to combat personal prejudice.

Although Ms. Bess read some of these directions aloud to students as she handed them out, it became clear that not all students ever read the directions in full on their own as she had assigned. As James told me at the end of the course, he had stopped caring about coming to class regularly after his character “died” because he had not realized that attendance alone earned students points in the simulation. Other students, however, had clearly read the directions as they came to class prepared with pockets full of dimes.

The next day was an “ordinary” day. Ms. Bess reminded students of upcoming homework as she returned the papers they had handed in earlier. As she called out students’ names to retrieve their work, she pointed out good grades and showed off especially creative assignments to the other students. The new reading assigned was an oral history from a victim of *Kristallnacht*, the Night of the Broken Glass, and Ms. Bess warned the students not to glue broken shards of glass on the “backsides” of their homework without covering it with Saran Wrap. (She had already cut her hand once that way.) After this business was over, Ms. Bess explained that she would spend the rest of the class session lecturing on the Nazi hierarchy of power and its attendant levels of terrorization, from the Hitler *Jugend* (or Hitler Youth Corps) up through the Gestapo. Before starting, however, she revealed that two crucial characteristics had been generated and recorded for each student’s role in the simulation. She passed around a single sheet for the students to check that their birthdays and the jobs they had chosen had been recorded accurately. Ms. Bess had assigned fictitious ages to the class members based on their real ages such that the oldest student in the class, a senior taking the course to graduate, became the oldest character in the simulation at 75. The youngest student in the class was assigned to be only six. The list circulated around the room as the students scrutinized its information.

Some of the students had done research on which jobs might help their characters “stay alive,” asking previous students whether it was better to be a metal polisher or a history teacher. Other students chose jobs based on their characters’ real-life counterparts. Some students used both strategies. Pepe, an adventurous and athletic young man whose Peruvian grandparents lived with him, had flipped a coin between “mom, dad, friend and sister” in order to decide whom to “take along” on the simulation. In the end, he “took” two characters: a female friend, 15, whom he thought would survive because he had chosen for her to be a translator even though she didn’t speak another language in real life, and his sister, 18, whom he thought was “probably gonna die” because he had made her a musician, modeled on her real life passion for violin. Pepe’s own character was a 20-year-old male doctor, a career he had chosen for his character because he himself wanted to become a doctor one day. Vanessa, a shy and hard-working student of Mexican descent, had chosen for her character to be a nurse and to “take along” her sister. Unlike Pepe, she chose a medical

career not because it was reflective of her own goals, but because she thought it might aid her in surviving; "I thought that maybe, perhaps," she explained slowly, she'd be useful "in a concentration camp to help the people that were sick" since, as she understood it, the SS "don't want to spread around disease or something like that." She had thought up this strategy herself. As the list continued on its journey from desk to desk, Ms. Bess explained, "You've also been assigned a number, and I intend it to be depersonalizing." "It's horrible, but you'll get used to it," she elaborated. "We all do."

Ms. Bess's tone gave her the impression of a hard-edged, tough-as-nails teacher. On occasion, she would swear, and rarely did she smile just for the sake of it, but she was not humorless. She ended this class session with the first part of a slide show on the concentration camp, Dachau, which she and her husband had visited on their honeymoon.

The next day, Ms. Bess finished the slide show, the lights went up, and she eased the students into their first experience of the simulation by distributing copies of the class census. The students read the list, looking for their own names and the names of their Cherished Ones as Ms. Bess explained "Roll Call." Each student's identity number had been written in bold marker on the face of a small button envelope. At "Roll Call" she would distribute the envelopes on the desks across the room, and each student would scramble to find the one with his or her number on it. "The purpose of Roll Call is to weed out the weak," Ms. Bess explained, hinting at the authoritarian character she would play in the simulation. "So we can do anything we want just to stay alive?" James asked, seeming to take the simulation seriously. "James is dirty," another student remarked, implying that James might not "play fair." "James," Ms. Bess cautioned, "If you want to learn a lesson, loose lips sink ships."

"Ok, Clear your desks," Ms. Bess told the students to the noise of books dropping to the floor. In the first row sat Desmond, a talkative, vivacious, African-American young man with a set of crutches leaning against his desk. Desmond had just had an operation to eliminate the cancer from his left kneecap, and the scars showed beneath his shorts. "Desmond has a problem," Ms. Bess broadcast as the tension in the room built. "If anybody finds his number—what number are you, Desmond?—if anybody finds number 318, that's Desmond's." "I want you all to help each other," she entreated. "Now put your hands in your laps," she commanded. As Ms. Bess walked around the class, placing the envelopes, number side down, on each desk, she told a story from a past year's "roll call."

Now, Rosa Michaels, she was lucky. Twice it turned out that her number was right on her own desk. That's luck. Other times, she survived because somebody called out her number and helped her out. You'll see.

[“Oh, we can do that?” asks Pepe.]

Absolutely. Stick together; help each other. I promise you that you will live longer. If you go cut-throat, I will cut you down.

Ms. Bess explained that this first “practice” run would happen in two phases, odds and evens. “302 is even, right?” James double-checked. “Everyone ready?” Ms. Bess asked. The odds went first. Wordlessly, Ms. Bess started flashing the lights on and off in the room, as half the students in the class ran from desk to desk looking for their numbers. The atmospheric effect was eerie. The dark moments were pitch black, punctured by the impression of student statues, stilted and strobe-like in their movements. A long two minutes passed this way as each of the students lurched to his seat, envelope in hand. A young white woman, Adrienne, had grabbed Desmond’s number and placed it on his desk while searching for her own. The last student sat down, and Ms. Bess kept the lights on. This had been a test run only, so this last student’s “life” was spared for the moment.

Inside the envelopes, the students found “Identity Cards,” small passport-sized cards they were instructed to fill out and keep with them at all times. The students wrote in their names, ages, occupations, and nationalities. “You’re all German,” Ms. Bess informed them. As she moved around the room, stamping the cards with the word “Gestapo” in tiny, distinctive, Old English, red letters, Ms. Bess explained that in past years students had duplicated these cards, such that she now stamped them to guarantee their authenticity. “You’ve had some mean-ass students,” Calypso, the African-American young woman sitting in front of me muttered.

THE SIMULATION (FOR REAL)

The next day, the second Thursday of the term, Ms. Bess began the (real) simulation. Twenty five minutes of class had passed in a discussion of the Great Depression when Calypso asked, “Are we gonna play today?”

Oh, I wish there was another word besides “play” [Ms. Bess responds]. Learning should be enjoyable, but I don’t want to hear someone claim, “Oh, Ms. Bess, you’re trivializing the Holocaust.” It just makes me cringe.

With that, the class began their first real *Gestapo* activity. After explaining that the students would need money on occasion, Ms. Bess “opened a bank” in which the students could store it. Pepe was suspicious, asking, “Is your bank honest?” Ms. Bess assured him that it was, and a number of students made deposits. Ms. Bess wrote down each name and beside it, the amount deposited. Alyana, Pepe, Toro, Shirak, and Christopher stepped to the front of the class and dropped their dimes in the canister. Ms. Bess had decided that this first day was worth eight points and instructed the teaching assistant to bestow the points on every student in attendance.

Sitting at the “bank” in front of the class, Ms. Bess eyed the students seriously as she talked and then read from her script of the simulation.

Ok, We're about to begin. As I look across all of your faces, sometimes I ask myself, "Do I have any feeling about what might happen to you?" [she pauses] and I truly don't. I truly don't. I had one girl last year, and I just had a feeling about her. I thought, "She's lucky." I had her as a ninth grader, and I just watched her use her charm and her luck and her looks, and I just had the feeling that she would make it. And sure enough, she did. And . . . that's exactly how this woman I think will go through her life. As I look at all of you, I really don't know; I don't get a strong hit about any of you. So, if you think I know what's gonna happen, I don't. I don't have a clue. . . . [The script begins here, with Ms. Bess's downward glance serving as a cue that she has begun reading from it. Almost immediately, though, Ms. Bess clearly ad libs; only the first few sentences are read verbatim.]

. . . This simulation begins in 1932. Now we know from class that the Great Depression has raged across Germany. Forty per cent of the people in Germany are unemployed, cannot find work—want to, but cannot find work. Now everyone in this classroom is Jewish, except for one, and I'll explain that later.

. . . Now because we're Jewish, we're affected as well. The forty per cent applies to us, too. We are unemployed, many of us. Some of you have lost your businesses. The Great Depression has not spared us, but guess who the Nazis blame? They blame the Jews; The Jewish conspiracy, the Jewish bankers, the "International Jewish businessmen" have somehow caused this calamity to happen. And we must, I imagine we must stay home at night reading Nazi propaganda and thinking, "They're blaming us? And we're suffering just as much as everyone else is?"

. . . Who in here has a Cherished One who may be forty-five or fifty or older? [Four hands are raised.] . . . And are they male? [One hand remains.]

. . . You might have had a relative, or maybe you [yourself] fought in WWI. Of all the soldiers in WWI, the Jewish soldiers actually received more medals than the non-Jewish soldiers. So, many of you may have lost parents in the War, patriotic Germans who were also Jewish who fought for their country and died for their country.

. . . Now, Jews have lived in Germany for thousands of years. Most of us can trace our ancestry back hundreds of years we've lived in Germany. We're not newcomers; we're not immigrants. We have lived in this place for a long time. Chances are the home where we live is the home where your great-grandmother was born. The town where you live is the town where your family has lived for hundreds of years.

Ms. Bess almost interrupted herself to let the students know they could ask questions as they did during "regular class time"; student questions, which would typically have been blurted out in this class culture, might seem like an intrusion in the hush that had befallen the room. So far, none of the students had uttered a sound.

We've heard stories from our parents and our grandparents about persecution. One of my speakers, she said that she heard a story that when her great-grandmother was a child, somebody in her town gave birth to a baby with two heads. ["Really?" James can't help but ask.]

. . . It happens. And who did they blame for this—they blamed the Jewish people in the town, Ok? And someone's house was burnt. She said people were lynched—that's more of an American term, but Jews would routinely be victims of persecution. There would be a wave of violence that would strike, and I don't think any one of us in here probably lives in a place where we haven't heard stories of Jews being persecuted, but it seems that times always got better; we continued our lives, and we just are maybe used to suffering. We've gotten used to being a small minority. What percentage? [Ms. Bess quizzes the students.]

["One," some students reply.]

Ok, that's on the test. Please have that little, tiny "one" ready. One per cent.

In this last exchange, Ms. Bess's role as the teacher of the class, the reinforcer of historical facts, shows through the simulation script; rather than talking in the first person, she momentarily switches to the second person. What struck me from the moment Ms. Bess started to read from the script, though, was the uniqueness of speaking in the first person about Jews. In reality, I was the only Jewish person in the room, and yet Ms. Bess was pretending that all the students (and she herself for the moment) were Jewish.⁶ This narrative gesture became increasingly important to me as the students themselves began to speak about this history in the first person, an indication that they were developing the sense of empathy—or at least identification—Ms. Bess wanted to cultivate in them.

In the next few minutes, Ms. Bess described that Jews need not be religious and may not believe in God and could still be culturally Jewish. She used the example of her husband who does not believe in God, but who grew up in Brooklyn, New York, surrounded by Jews speaking Yiddish. (When one student asked for an example of a Yiddish term she has learned from him, Ms. Bess said, "*shiksa*, like me." A "*shiksa*" is the Yiddish term for a non-Jewish woman. "A couple others I know, but they're real vulgar," she joked.) When the giggles settled, Ms. Bess continued.

Now I'm going to ask all of you to say something to the class. I'd like you to ask yourself, "Am I a religious person?" I don't care what your faith is, but "Is religion important to me?" Is Church important, or whatever—temple? Are you a devout believer?

As she did throughout the simulation, Ms. Bess here overlaid the present situations of the students onto the past realities of German Jews. She was asking each student to consider his or her own religious attitude in order to answer the question on behalf of the Jewish character to be played. Ms. Bess then asked the students to declare to the class whether they were "Jewish first" or "German first." Were they "more Jewish" or "more German?" In actuality, she was asking how they thought of themselves in their own modern American context; were they "more religious" or "more American?"⁷ One by one, the students answered, dividing the class roughly evenly. James answered "German" without having to think about it. Pepe similarly identified as "German first." Vanessa answered "Jewish." In real life, she attended Catholic mass with her family every Sunday and was looking forward to becoming confirmed when I first interviewed her. "You see, we're different," Ms. Bess concluded; "not all Jews were religious, and it's important to understand that."

Again Ms. Bess read from her script, occasionally embellishing it with her own stories. Ms. Bess described the 1932 elections and Hitler's subsequent seizing of power. The students asked factual questions, and Ms. Bess answered them. Essentially, she was lecturing exactly as she would do occasionally throughout the other, nonsimulated units in the course. Nonetheless, the seriousness in the class, the level of engagement of the students,

was unrivaled in the two weeks up to that point. The students were seemingly enthralled by the information; their eyes were riveted on their teacher, and there were no audible side conversations being carried on or secret notes being passed. Ms. Bess continued, asking questions that called on the students to give personal responses: "What do you say to yourselves when you see all this anti-Semitic propaganda?" "Do you believe it?" "What do you say to your daughter when she comes home with a black eye because somebody hit her [and . . .] called her a 'dirty Jew'?" Through this kind of questioning, Ms. Bess carved space in the curriculum for her students to engage moral questions seriously and to become emotionally entangled with their historical counterparts.

Later in the lesson, Ms. Bess defined a word on their vocabulary list, *mischling*, the Nazi term used to describe people considered to be "mixed" racially. The students dutifully wrote down the definition. "Now," Ms. Bess gathered their attention. "Is there anyone in here whose mother and father are of . . . different race[s]?" Two students in the class raised their hands, Jonny and Calypso. Ms. Bess saw Calypso first.

Calypso, I'm going to ask you to play the role of a *mischling*, ok? Your mother is Aryan; you're father is Jewish. Now, Calypso, this may work to your benefit, and you may survive because of this.

. . . Half of her blood is regarded as superior, but half is inferior [Ms. Bess has turned to the rest of the class], and they don't know what to do with people like you. Hitler is truly a racist. So, the laws will be different for you. . . . When we roll call, Calypso, you roll call both times. You get to go twice.

["But doesn't that increase my chances of dying?" Calypso interrupts.]

. . . No, it increases your chances of living. You get to roll call twice; you have less chance of being the last person. . . . You should be fine. But, if we ever do *Gestapo* on a day that you're absent, we'll assume that your mother has died and that you are no longer protected by her blood, and then you'll be in the situation with the rest of us.

Ms. Bess implored the students to write down the identity number of their class *mischling*. "You'll need it for the test," she cautioned them.

By the close of the session, Ms. Bess had told the students about ways to identify Jews, the Boycott of April 1, 1933, the Nuremberg Laws, and the disappearance of opponents of the Nazi regime. Only a few minutes were left when Ms. Bess announced that someone from the class would be "arrested" and "sent to Dachau" as a political prisoner. She looked around the room, eyeing the students, her gaze settling on James. "James, I think I'm going to have you arrested because . . . you're very firm in your opinions and there's something about you that would scare me, . . . if I were the Gestapo," she said.

Ms. Bess's choice of James puzzled me. I found it hard to consider him "most likely to be sent to Dachau." In fact, during a classroom debate the first week of the semester, James had aligned himself strongly with the "livelihood" side over "liberty," expressing avid support of even a fascistic

government if it would guarantee him and his family sustenance. At that time, he was quite willing to dismiss the importance of preserving individual liberties. Especially in view of this opinion, I thought Ms. Bess's choice of him as a political prisoner was odd. What the choice highlights, though, is the speed and dynamism of the simulation setting; Ms. Bess had very little time to reflect in making her split-second decisions (Shulman, 1987; Jackson, 1968). Although James didn't fit the category of political opinion she sought to fill, he was outspoken in class and willing to challenge authority. "But, James, thank your mother and father tonight when you go home," Ms. Bess added, "because, you know what? You're only eight years old." Ms. Bess paused dramatically between each word as she stated James's fictitious age. "They're not sending an eight year old to Dachau [in 1933]; If you were eighteen, you'd be in Dachau," she continued.

Looking around the room for another candidate, Ms. Bess found none. "As I look across the room at the rest of you, I don't think there's anyone in here that would have been sent to Dachau," she said, definitive in her judgment. "I don't have a defiant, in-my-face kind of student," Ms. Bess said as James interrupted, "Except for me?" Some jockeying by Desmond followed, as he tried to claim that he was that kind of student, too, but Ms. Bess was not to be convinced. Instead, she noted that Ashisha was absent that day, reminding students, "If you are absent, you are prey." Because Ashisha's character was female, and all the political prisoners sent to Dachau in the early 1930s were male, Ms. Bess spared her, "arresting" in her place one of Ashisha's Cherished Ones. "Ashisha is not here to defend her friend, but I need a dime because that is the rent and board at Dachau," Ms. Bess explained, warning Ashisha's classmates that if a dime didn't show up on her table within 10 seconds, Ashisha's friend would "die." Ms. Bess began to count as conversation erupted among the students. "I'm not giving up my dime," remarked one young woman with three-inch-long, powder blue fingernails. Luke, who sat in the desk next to me for most of the course, whom I happened to know had four dimes in his pocket, sat wordlessly and motionless. Ms. Bess counted up to seven at an even, fast pace. At "eight," Adrienne rushed up to the desk in a panic and some students applauded as she paid the dime.

In an unusual move, Ms. Bess took the final moment of class to reveal that the next day they would have two "roll calls," and the last person standing would have a Cherished One arrested. "If we have a death, then we'll have a death," she remarked, her tone hard-boiled. "Tomorrow night, we've got the prom," one student reminded her. Other students chimed in that they had competing commitments for Friday, too; Desmond had to go to the hospital, James was getting a manicure for the prom, and another student had "student exchange." "Either you're here or you're not here," Ms. Bess replied coolly; "If you're looking for fairness in Nazi Germany, you're looking in the wrong place." Christopher, in an audible but subdued voice, uttered, "I don't wanna play anymore," just before the bell rang.

EARLY REACTIONS TO THE SIMULATION

I have quoted the students' first experience with *Gestapo* at some length because many of its themes recurred as the simulation played out, themes such as: Ms. Bess's dual roles as simulator and teacher, the ensuing environments of competition and cooperation, the thrill of surprise, and the overlapping of histories. Before describing the rest of the simulation, I pause here to consider these important motifs.

Ms. Bess's role consistently treaded the boundary between controller and comrade, the shifts being demarcated by her use of pronouns. At times she used the first-person to signify her allegiance with the class, her membership as one of the group; at other times, and increasingly often, she used the second-person singular or plural as evidence of her god-like status in the simulation. Because of her dual role, a split morality emerged, one that already appears in nascent form above. As stager of events, Ms. Bess often dictated interactions, the effects and evidence of her hierarchical power (e.g., "If you go cut-throat, I will cut you down"). And yet, as comrade at arms, she would practically enlist the students to defy the authority of her other role, beseeching them to help each other and sharing tips with them on how to "survive." I remember a moment, not too long after this class, when I was shocked to see Ms. Bess showing her students how to "tag" their envelopes for easier recognition during "roll call." The juxtaposition of her having conducted a "roll call" and then showing students how to "win" at them was startling. Ms. Bess was thus both "tormentor" and "savior," "torturer" and "saint," dualities with problematic moral implications. Her role as simulator—controlling, cold, and calculating—necessarily compromised the students' trust she could foster as their teacher.

In the classroom, these roles translated into two occasionally conflicting tendencies. When Ms. Bess was acting as the former, the simulation dictator, the students were almost always set against each other, forced to compete for precious few rewards: racing to find their identity cards, vying for exit visas, turning each other in, and so forth. During these times, each student acted on his or her own behalf only, and the individual became a means and an end in itself. By contrast, there were times when the students indeed helped each other as Ms. Bess, in her other role, entreated. The students gave each other dimes, handed off identity envelopes, divulged crucial pieces of information and the like, sharing in a profound, if fleeting, sense of community. Adrienne's act of retrieving Desmond's envelope, for example, was repeated in different ways again and again by other students in the class. These two environments of competition and cooperation symbiotically thrived throughout the simulation, trading positions in the fore- and backgrounds and occasionally colliding full force.

The sense of surprise wove through the simulation regardless of which role Ms. Bess was playing or which "environment" held center-stage. The

switching of these two elements alone provided a kind of surprise as no one knew what would come next. Although in the class session described above, Ms. Bess announced when the simulation would next occur, for the most part no one except her knew when the simulation would resurface. Moreover, when it did, none of its component parts reappeared in the same form; while the containers of experience might remain the same, their contents varied tremendously. Specifically, no two “roll calls” and no two “deaths” were alike. Both became more brutal as the imagined years passed. “Roll calls,” for example, transformed in shape. The cards were no longer placed on desks, but instead were moved all over the room or to a big pile on the floor, and the participants themselves moved outside the class to take a running start to get to the classroom door. The “deaths” became more gruesome as well, as this “history” progressed: from a political opponent’s death in Dachau, to a car striking a Jew forced to walk in the street under the Nuremberg Laws, to ghetto deaths, a *Babi Yar* shooting, and of course, to the symbolic center of the Holocaust, the gas chambers.

Throughout the simulation Ms. Bess often used the students’ present realities to shape the “historical reality” of the simulation, and vice versa. When seeking out the class *mischling*, for example, Ms. Bess chose Calypso because of her bi-racial heritage. When deciding who ought to be “arrested” first as a political prisoner, Ms. Bess singled out James for his ‘in-your-face’ attitude, what I would consider a bit of a stretch since James wasn’t yet an adult and, more importantly, his “in-your-face” attitude lacked political overtones. Nonetheless, these moves on Ms. Bess’s part attempted to collapse the lived present onto the distant past. In these ways, Ms. Bess “normalized” Holocaust history for the students, bridging their potential gaps in historical imagination by allowing them to see Holocaust history as at least loosely akin to their own lives, not quite as distant or historically remote as it might have seemed to them otherwise.

As engaging as these moves made that history, Ms. Bess’s kaleidoscopic maneuvers sometimes worked against students’ gaining a historically accurate perception of the Holocaust; for many students, the simulation itself shaped some misguided notions of the historical reality. In this session alone, students may have gotten the sense that Jews in pre-World War II Germany were as diverse in their senses of Jewishness as the American students sitting in the room were in their own senses of religious affiliation, when in fact the majority of German Jews at the time were assimilated and probably thought of themselves as being “German” first. Furthermore, the comparison alone somewhat diminishes the special status of Jewishness as both religion and ethnicity (not to mention the Nazis’ biologically-based definition of race). Although Ms. Bess’s historical conflation in this activity may have misguided students both regarding the proportions of religious to assimilated German Jews and regarding the special statuses involved in being a European Jew in the early 1930s, her

methods nonetheless clearly heightened the students' potential to empathize across continents, situations, and time.

Vanessa, for example, thought the simulation was "really interesting" because it spurred her historical imagination with respect to the plight of Jewish victims, in her words, "You just get to—not really feel like it, 'cause I could never feel how they did—but try to take a little part of how they were treated in those days." Even in its first week, the simulation was powerful enough for her that it reached into her thinking outside of school. She told me that when she overheard a racist incident, she thought about "how the Jewish people were treated during World War II." For Pepe, too, the simulation was something "different from other classes," as he explained, because it "kinda gets you feeling like other people might have felt during World War II." When I asked him how he'd respond to critics who might object to the simulation for making a game out of truly tragic events, Pepe rejected the possibility almost indignantly. "It's not a game," he rebuffed the imaginary critics:

[Ms. Bess,] she's teaching you something and taking you through the steps. She's just showing examples. She's just using you as an example of the statistics and the people.

Even Calypso, who had been bored by the course in its first weeks, had become engaged by the simulation, justifying its use as a teaching technique and thinking of class material beyond class time. "It's like hard enough for me to deal with and think about . . . the Civil Rights Movement," she said, "like [that] I couldn't go to school, or like be sitting here with you [a white person], you know?" "That's hard for me to realize," she continued, "so *this* [the Holocaust] is like . . . it has *no* reality to me." To Calypso, the simulation was trying to bridge that failure of imagination by "try[ing] to put the reality of the Holocaust into our lives." And judging from Calypso's other remarks, the simulation was accomplishing that goal. "Ms. Bess's class really has a big impact on my life now," she said to me during our second interview, illustrating that sense with an example of imaginatively applying the Nuremberg Laws to her own life: "Sometimes I'll be walking down the street and I'll be thinking, 'Damn,' you know? What if I had to like walk in the street? What if I wasn't just allowed to walk on the sidewalk? I was thinking about that, and thinking like that's so crazy." She even called the simulation "fun," embellishing her explanation with an anecdote.

When [Ms. Bess] first told us, you know, like, "Yeah, there's this one girl who came from the hospital" [rather than miss a class that might involve simulating], I was like, "whatever, you're lying." I was like, no student cares that much. [Calypso's vocal tone and facial expression both reflect disdain for Ms. Bess at this moment.] But then, like last Monday, I didn't go to school, and then I woke up at like twelve, and I was like, "Damn, I need to get to Ms. Bess's class!" and I just threw on a tee-

shirt and jeans just for that class! [Calypso's laughter tumbles into her story.] And then I didn't even go to track practice; I just went home! And then, [when] I went home . . . I was like, "Oh God, I'm like one of those kids," and I was like, "Na ah." [Calypso's smile mocks herself both for being so dedicated to getting to class and for denying that she was like that.]

It is impossible for me to gauge how representative these students' reactions were of the class as a whole; nonetheless, their enthusiasm certainly seemed to have been shared by their peers. The other students in the class seemed just as attentive to the simulation, and attendance rates remained high.

THE SIMULATION CONTINUED

Over the next weeks, the simulation escalated. On Friday, the day of the Junior Prom, many students were absent, so rather than "roll call" to determine the "victims" of the day's events, Ms. Bess simply assigned fates to those who were absent or to their Cherished Ones. James's Cherished One was "killed" that day, having been housed in a mental institution in 1936. In our interview months later, he was still furious at what he perceived as the injustice of this untimely "death." "She only lived like one day," he fumed to me about the character of his mother. James claimed it was unfair for his character to be "taken" that day, "because it was Senior Cut Day *and* Junior Prom," he protested, utterly serious. "Eight hundred and sixty seven students were gone that day; that's more than half the school!" James knew because of his participation in student government. He elaborated:

Everybody had to get ready, and not even just get ready, everybody stayed home to sleep—I slept until one that day because I knew I wouldn't get home early that night and I wanted to have enough energy 'cause the next day I was going to [an amusement park]. . . . So it was unfair 'cause a lot of people were, we even told her, well the people that were going to the Junior Prom, we told her, we're not gonna be here, 'cause we gotta get ready, and she said, . . . "Well, Nazi Germany was unfair, so it's not fair."

After giving numerous examples of early Nazi anti-Jewish legislation, Ms. Bess described for the few students in class that day the process of emigration from Germany, the forms, the lines, and the money involved. She then opened a "visa office" for a limited time, exactly one minute. For 50 cents per family member, all in dimes, Ms. Bess allowed the payer to roll a die and emigrate to the country assigned to the number rolled: #1 Czechoslovakia, #2 Greece, #3 Denmark, #4 Poland, #5 France, #6 Palestine. The students ran to the front of the room, lining up to "get out." Johnny paid for Adrienne to emigrate because she was absent. Desmond

rolled Palestine, which in later weeks he would remember as “Pakistan.” Nine students were able to “emigrate” in the time allotted.

Other “deaths” occurred in the simulation that day, too. Ms. Bess drew randomly from the absentees to determine that Joe’s sister would “die” because she couldn’t get insulin from her Jewish pharmacist and naively turned instead to a “die-hard Nazi” pharmacist who “killed” her “in cold blood.” Near the end of the class session, Ms. Bess described the events of *Kristallnacht*, arresting Adrienne’s father and demanding from Ashisha, who had stayed in Germany, a payment in dimes for the cleanup of the streets and threatening her with her character’s arrest if she couldn’t pay immediately. When Ashisha whimpered that she didn’t have any dimes with her, Desmond successfully solicited funds for her from other class members.

At the beginning of the third week, Ms. Bess brought the first unit, “The Road to War,” to a close and started the second unit, “Happy Times for Hitler.” In this unit, she taught students about the prowess of Blitzkrieg, the invasion of Poland, and the occupation of Europe. The simulation reached the year 1939, when Jewish monies in German banks were seized. “That’s shady; they take all *our* money?” asked a shocked Calypso, using the first person to describe the Jewish characters’ predicament.

On Thursday, James arrived late to class. He sauntered in 20 minutes after the start of the period with a milk shake from a local diner in hand, a flagrant violation of the lunch-time, closed-campus policy at Gaucho High. “James you are bad,” Ms. Bess scolded without sounding upset. “You missed a quiz; I hope you had a good malt.” James apologized, not sounding contrite, and sat down at his desk beside me. The next day, Ms. Bess handed back the quizzes. As the other students took out their grade sheets to record their point totals, James complained to Ms. Bess. She responded, “You miss twenty minutes of class, that’s what happens.” “Well, can’t I make it up?” James asked. “No, you can’t make it up,” Ms. Bess said, almost amused, but mostly disdainful at the preposterousness of the request. James became visibly annoyed, his hackles rising at feeling unjustly treated. “That’s ridiculous; other kids miss class and you let them make up quizzes and tests!” he continued. “I shoulda not come to class at all, then I coulda made it up!” Ms. Bess, her voice rising now, explained that had his absence been excused with a “blue slip,” she would of course have let him make up the quiz, but as it was, he had “walked in with a chocolate malt” and thus she was on “complete concrete here” in denying him a make-up. “I shoulda just cut,” James argued angrily, not understanding why he would not be rewarded for having shown up at all. Calypso chose this time to ask if she could make up the same quiz she had missed because of a track meet, to which Ms. Bess agreed. “If you’ve got permission, yes.” James, stewing, repeated loudly, “I shoulda just cut.” “Yes, you should have cut,” Ms. Bess replied and moved on, though she was clearly bothered by the exchange, enough so to return to it two minutes later. “Sometimes being a teacher is

not a popularity contest,” she said firmly, if with a hint of apology. James sat at his desk, unresponsive and unmoving. Weeks later, James was still disappointed in Ms. Bess for this incident, though he tried to act nobly. “She still coulda let me took the test,” he said about missing the quiz, “but I’m not gonna hold that against her.”

In the fourth week, more “deaths” occurred when students had forgotten their IDs, had not completed their homework, or were absent. The remaining students had a choice to make between “hiding,” “buying false papers,” or doing nothing. Some students went into “hiding” and were assigned quotations to memorize and recite, acts that would serve as their protection; other students bought false identification for 80 cents (for a female) or a dollar (for a male) per passport.

In the class session representing the year 1940, 11 students were “forced into the Lodz ghetto” in Poland, among them Pepe, Calypso, Adrienne, and Ashisha. Ms. Bess sold each of these students a bright yellow felt armband to wear. At this point in the simulation, Pepe thought that his character was probably going to survive despite being sent to the ghetto, giving as the reason, “I’m the only doctor with a license” there. As a strategy for survival, Pepe had tried to keep his characters in the same place so that his attention wouldn’t be divided. When I asked him during our second interview to tell me what had happened to his characters, he answered in the first person.

First, we were in Germany, and then we emigrated to Czechoslovakia. And then the next day, Czechoslovakia had gotten like taken over by Germany, so we were at home, and I decided not to hide or to get fake ID. So, we got sent to the ghetto and been there since.

He had decided not to go into hiding both because memorization was difficult for him and because he had heard that “only one in ten survived from hiding, so not a very good chance.”

Because of his fictitious age as the oldest male in the ghetto, Isaiah was assigned to represent the leader of the Jewish Council or *Judenrat*. I was concerned for Isaiah when he was assigned to this role as I was already familiar with the delusional historical character he was meant to represent: Chaim Rumkowski. At that time, I had no notion as to how closely his simulated role would be made to resemble Rumkowski’s actual one. Moreover, Isaiah struck me as a hard-working, shy, and sweet-natured African-American teenager, not at all the “equivalent” of a sometimes brutal, egocentric, and megalomaniacal Rumkowski. As Rumkowski, Isaiah didn’t have to participate in “roll calls,” but was guaranteed “life” as long as he attended class and did Ms. Bess’s bidding. In his first day as *Judenrat* leader, for example, Ms. Bess had him borrow the canister marked “Ghetto” and copy down all the names and corresponding ages on the identity cards therein, making a list of those under his dominion. As Isaiah diligently

copied the list, Ms. Bess presented a “window of opportunity” for survival to one student.

One of my favorite [survivor] speakers, a teacher, . . . [his] first name was Paul, and he doesn't talk anymore; I think he's just talked out. He was Belgian and Jewish. He was sitting with his mother at a train station, and they were waiting for this train that was going to come pick them up. They were waiting there with their armbands on. And a Catholic Priest walked up to the mother and said, “Excuse me, Madame, I see that both of you are Jewish. My name is Father So-and-so, and I run a school in France, a school for boys. I'm afraid that if you and your son remain here, you'll both die. I'd like to offer you help. I'd like to take your son. I'll take him back to my school in France. I'm going to give him a different identity, a new name, and I'm going to try to keep him alive.”

. . . And this poor woman had a moment, because this train was leaving, to decide what to do with her son, who was about nine or ten. Now Paul remembers this moment clearly. He heard everything; he looked at his mother; he thought his mother would say, “No way.” And his mother didn't say anything. . . . And he grabbed at his mother, and he was crying; “. . . I don't want to lose you. . . . I don't—I'd rather die with you. Don't, Don't, Don't!” And his mother, he said, never said a word. She looked at the priest, and with her hand, she shoved Paul away. She never said a word. She didn't say good-bye, . . . but apparently she had spoken to the priest and said, “Tell him that if the war is over to come back, because he knows where we live, and I'll be there.”

. . . And he went kicking and screaming. I imagine the scene in this bustling railroad station and this little kid, you know, he's taken off by the arm, and he doesn't want to go with this priest. For all he knows, the priest is a serial killer. I mean, he doesn't know. In fact the priest was a very, very tender-hearted man who kept Paul alive the entire war.

After telling this story, Ms. Bess gave a free, false identity to Scott, the only 10-year-old character in the simulation. She also warned him to remind her that from then on, he would be “in hiding” in France. Like Isaiah, he would not participate in “roll calls.”

That same day, Ms. Bess interspersed segments from the movie *Schindler's List* (1993) and from the documentary film *Lodz Ghetto* (1989) to illustrate the horrible conditions of life in ghettos, as well as the continuation of culture and distribution of resources, the distinctions between “essential” and “nonessential” workers and various forms of ghetto death. The three students in the class who had chosen to be doctors or other medical personnel presented in-depth reports from research they had been assigned to do about typhus. Then the students who had chosen to go into hiding took turns reciting the first of four quotations they would have to memorize in order to remain safely hidden.

One betrayed one's Jewishness by every anxious movement one made; by every uncertain step one took; by one's eyes that were those of a hunted animal; by one's general appearance on which persecution had left its stamp.⁸

Desmond was the first student to recite, and was thus shown leniency despite making a mistake; rather than being “killed,” his character was

“arrested” and taken to the “ghetto,” where he subsequently became chief of the Jewish police. Vanessa recited perfectly, her eyes glued to the ceiling the entire time. When I interviewed her a week later, she made little of her apparent nervousness at the time of the recitation; she was far more thankful for its results. “So far, . . . we’re in hiding in Denmark under a false ID, and so far, nothing’s happened to us,” she said of her simulation characters, relief audible in her tone of voice even after a week. Desmond mouthed the words to a friend who struggled to remember the complicated quotation at her turn after Vanessa’s. By the time James’s turn arrived, he was able to recite most of the quotation, even though he had not prepared before class; he stalled out at the last few words, though, and was “arrested.” The class fell silent each time a fellow student stood before them to recite. In the last five minutes of the session, Ms. Bess showed a video clip that graphically illustrated the effects of starvation in the Lodz Ghetto; in the silence of the room as the lights went up, Ms. Bess “announced a death.” Calypso, who was absent that day, would “die” a “common death,” by starvation. “Number 301, Ghetto Lodz, 1940,” Ms. Bess commanded the students to note in their censuses.

Calypso had made sure to attend class fastidiously until that day when she was so sick she “just could not get out of bed.” Oddly, when she thought that Ms. Bess was probably going to “kill” her Cherished One for being absent that day, she was “ready to be hella mad.” (Ms. Bess had announced early on in the simulation that she would try to save the classroom characters by forfeiting Cherished Ones first.) When Calypso did return to class and found out that her own character had been “killed” instead of her Cherished One, she was very relieved; “I was like, ‘Thank God,’” she told me. Calypso had been slightly ambivalent about her own character; she was attached to “her” but also slightly removed, a tension that was evident in her usage of both first- and third-person case in describing “her.” Impressive to me was the way Calypso narrated the character’s “Jewish” history as if it were her own. When I asked her to recount this character’s story months after her “death,” Calypso said the following:

I never really got to know her that much ‘cause Ms. Bess killed her hella quick, but I was 46, Jewish, of course, and I . . . lived in Germany, and right when Hitler started taking over, at the very beginning, like ‘32, . . . I moved to Czechoslovakia. That cost me hella money. After that, Hitler eventually took over Czechoslovakia, in ‘39 or something, and then, he put me in a ghetto. He took away all my money and put me in a ghetto. And then I starved to death in the ghetto.

The next day, both James’s own character and Calypso’s Cherished One were “killed.” James had become the youngest character in the ghetto and thus had “died of starvation” in 1941. Not surprisingly, he became less engaged in the simulation as a result, marked by a change in his grades and attitude. By our second interview, he was no longer the A student he expected to be, earning a B for having missed the quiz and not attending

the extra-credit movies. (James ended up with a C- as his final grade for the course.) When asked about the class, he said, "it's fine," but with a sarcastic tone that implied he didn't mean it. "Once you die, it's like, 'I don't care,'" he told me. At that point, he started to make fun of other students in the room who still seemed to take the simulation to heart. As James explained later, "Half of us was already dead, . . . and we were just joking with people that were alive, you know?"

Calypso's Cherished One died during a "roll call." Despite being a track star at Gaucho, Calypso had been the last one to find her envelope that day. Unlike her own character's "death," this one, Abdul's, affected her deeply. She explained to me why in a voice that was uncharacteristically serious.

The person I took with me, Abdul, was my ex-boyfriend. And in real life, he really did get killed on March 18. He went to Murphy High [near Gaucho], and he was shot in the head, and so now when I think back on it, I wish I didn't take him because when [Ms. Bess] really killed him in class, I was like hella devastated. You know, I was like, "Nooooo," . . . I was hella mad.

. . . We did "Roll Call," and I wasn't there the day before, and she had told everybody to turn in their envelopes, but I still had mine 'cause I wasn't there the day before, and I didn't know, so, my envelope wasn't in the "Roll Call," so I couldn't find it. So, I was the last one. And then I was like, "Wait, Ms. Bess, how am I supposed to find it [if it's not even there]?" And she was like, "Ohhhh," and then so she killed him, and I was like hella mad.

. . . [In the "roll call"], I took somebody else's number so I would have it until I found mine, and then I put it back on the desk. [Calypso's laughter returns as she is somewhat embarrassed by the overtones of this action.] But, I couldn't find it, like for ten minutes, and we just couldn't figure it out.

. . . When I was telling one of my friends from another class who did it [*Gestapo*] last year, he was like, "You shouldn't have taken 'Dule' [Abdul] 'cause—you know, . . . because it was gonna be such a big deal, he said, 'cause it's so realistic.' He was like, 'You shoulda just taken your mom or something.'" I know I should have.

Abdul had been Calypso's boyfriend when he died. "I didn't like really think about it," she explained about choosing Abdul as her Cherished One. "[Ms. Bess] was just like, 'You can bring one person,' and I was like, 'I know who *I'd* bring'." The structure of the simulation, in overlaying her life onto Holocaust history, prompted Calypso to experience her loss doubly. By the end of that week, 14 students had "died," their cards ceremonially tacked to the sideboard of the classroom. I was relieved when Ms. Bess returned to the "regular" curriculum for a few days.

The Monday of the fifth week, the students returned to the simulation after taking group quizzes on the range of activities in which Partisans participated. "This [video] segment is particularly hard for me to see, being a woman," Ms. Bess confessed to the class, before showing it, "but this happened in the Lodz Ghetto." "This will affect one woman in the ghetto," she warned, "and, Isaiah, it's your job to quickly give me that person; I need her to be of child-bearing age." The moment of anticipation gave way to

flurries of discussion as Ms. Bess had to fiddle with the VCR to make it work. "Does it have to be someone in the class—I mean, can it be a loved one?" Alyana asked, as James quickly moved over to consult Isaiah on whom to choose. "Not me," Adrienne called out from across the room. The VCR stuttered to life, suddenly, in the midst of the Lodz Ghetto hospital. In flat tones accompanied by stark photographs, the narrator described its destruction, the brutality of new-born babies being thrown from its second-story windows, and one new mother fleeing from her bed only to be shot. "I've never had a baby, but I can't imagine anything as cruel as going into labor and giving birth to a baby and having someone take my child and throw it out a window," Ms. Bess remarked, "and then having them kill me." "Of course the Jewish police kept law and order" throughout the massacre, she explained. "This is a hard death to have anyone take on," Ms. Bess said almost apologetically, then hardening, "but Isaiah, I want you to give me the name of any female between the ages of fifteen and forty." "Who is that?" she asked as Isaiah stared down at his list. "Quick," she added, not more than two seconds later. "Three forty four," Isaiah said quietly. Ms. Bess and the students scanned their lists, and Ms. Bess pronounced, "That's Pepe's sister." Pepe, a little unbelieving, asked, "How'd she die again?" and Ms. Bess summarized, "She was killed in the massacre at the hospital, 1941." Pepe looked serious as the class members filled in their censuses. "This is a lovely lady, Pepe," Ms. Bess said to him consolingly, having taught his sister last year, "and I hate to ask her to take on this role; she was simply the right age."

No sooner had Pepe's sister "died" than Ms. Bess turned Isaiah's list over to Desmond. "Desmond is a sweet, charming young man," Ms. Bess said to the class, "but . . . he's part of the Jewish police, and I want you to understand what that means." "So, Desmond, I want you to kill somebody right now," she pronounced. Desmond seemed to smile a little, prompting Ms. Bess to probe him confrontationally, "You have a problem with that?" "No," he remarked, which she immediately challenged, "Why not? Not even a little problem?" After a shrug and a pause, Desmond nodded, "naww." James piped in eagerly, "make it somebody good." For the first time in the semester, I saw students besides James clearly treating the simulation lightly. "Who's somebody good, James?" Ms. Bess asked James, her disapproval barely masked by her tough demeanor. James began to explain, "Well, like somebody you don't like or," but Ms. Bess interrupted him, not caring for his answer. "The people who are talking, I notice, are all dead," she proclaimed. "I don't know if you'd be talking if you were in the ghetto," she scolded, and the hum in the classroom subsided. "Is there like an age or anything you want?" Desmond asked, to which she replied, "I don't care. This is just a symbol, a gesture of your power."

Despite his protestations of not caring, Desmond interestingly chose not to "take" someone in the room, but rather a Cherished One of Johnny, the only student in the class who got to play two characters in the simulation.

(Johnny got to “travel” through the simulation twice because he himself was a member of the class, and a close friend of his in the class had chosen to take him along as a Cherished One.) Ms. Bess dictated this death to the class, “Killed in the ghetto by the Jewish police,” elaborating:

These men were evil. I think they did things they didn’t have to do. Imagine if you gave, at Gaucho High, twenty ninth-graders were allowed to carry mace, wear uniforms. . . . There are people at this high school that would love to play with you, mess with you. You know, maybe you beat them up in fourth grade; maybe you got a better test grade than they did in biology; maybe this, maybe that; maybe they’re jealous because you’ve got a cute girlfriend. And they just want to make your life miserable because they’re damaged. . . . The Jewish police are the victims, but they have been chosen to even victimize the victims.

I have to admit that this conversational moment made me distinctly uncomfortable. Although the Jewish police were clearly guilty and much reviled post-war, were they more or less “damaged” than the Polish non-Jews living outside of the ghetto walls who lived within feet of rampant starvation while doing nothing or, worse yet, collaborating in and profiting from it? Ms. Bess was painting “evil” in broad strokes rather than encouraging her students to consider fully the roles history casts people to play. It seemed to me that the momentum of the simulation itself didn’t allow the class to stop and discuss the moral complexities of Ms. Bess’s claims. I hoped she would return at some later point to the questions surrounding gradations of culpability and victimization.

Desmond raised his hand and, when called on, volunteered a justification for choosing the “death” he had; unwittingly, he adopted a kind of historically accurate instrumentalism when he remarked, “He was a butcher anyway, so he didn’t have no use.” Despite recognizing a note of guilt in Desmond’s having supplied justification at all, Ms. Bess did not assuage him. “Now, I’m not trying to make you feel bad; I’m here to try to help you understand how these kinds of things happened, how the SS, which was very small in number, could dominate a huge ghetto of a half a million people, and they did it with collaborators, Jewish collaborators in the form of Isaiah and Desmond.”⁹

Ms. Bess moved on to describe the slave labor camp, Bergen-Belsen, demanding from Isaiah more characters to be interned there. Isaiah’s first choice was a Cherished One, and thus someone not in the room. The second name he uttered as he was thinking was Adrienne’s. “Adrienne,” Ms. Bess immediately announced, “I think that’s a good choice.” James let out a mocking “Ha!” but Adrienne’s face was serious and her tone plaintive as she gently protested. James started yelling, “Kill her! Kill her!” with some whimsy in his voice while Adrienne began to beg, “Isaiah, I let you borrow my pen.” She moved across the room to stand over Isaiah, who was still seated at his desk. “You can’t send me to a labor camp with my own pen!” she said, visibly more upset. Isaiah looked up at her, clearly feeling

awkward. “How ‘bout Eva Black?” Ms. Bess asked, and for a moment it was unclear as to whether she was suggesting Eva Black instead of or in addition to Adrienne. When it turned out that Eva Black was Isaiah’s mother, Ms. Bess moved onto the next name. “How ‘bout Jill Johnson?” she asked, to which Pepe replied, “She’s already dead.” “Doesn’t the person have to be from ghetto B?” Pepe then asked, but Ms. Bess seemed slightly frustrated at not finding another name and said, “I don’t care.” “Gardner Jones,” she suggested. “Ms. Bess, don’t you ever get [a] guilty conscience about playing this game?” Calypso cut in, uncomfortable with the bargaining in progress. “No,” the matter-of-fact reply came:

Because I know that the end-product is better than what I have to do. Sometimes I feel bad that things happen to individual people, yes. But you know that I have to believe that what I’m doing is something larger than just the one-on-one, Adrienne’s personal feelings. I know that Adrienne’s a strong person. I know that Adrienne wants to live. But I know that Adrienne also wants to learn, and I assume that for all of you, although some of you mask it in funny ways. I know that you all want to learn. We’re born learners.

Ms. Bess quickly turned her attention to the simulation, reading off the names of the eight characters “in Bergen-Belsen.” The list included Adrienne. As Ms. Bess passed her name, Hal uttered audibly, “Good.” Adrienne shot back, more audibly, “Fuck you, Hal. Shut up.” Ms. Bess continued reading, undaunted. When the list ended, Desmond called out on Adrienne’s behalf, “I thought [Isaiah] gave another name other than Adrienne’s.” Chatter swelled. “He didn’t say me,” Adrienne maintained. Four or five voices answered Adrienne in unison, clearly pointing out Ms. Bess as the enemy—“*She* did.” “She’s not the *Judenrat*,” Adrienne proclaimed indignantly. “Ah, does the *Judenrat* want to disagree with me?” Ms. Bess challenged Isaiah, staring at him hard-eyed. Isaiah and Adrienne responded together, “Yea.” Without missing a beat, Ms. Bess said, “Then you’re dead.”

I don’t know whose sharp inhale punctuated the end of her sentence, but Desmond’s surprised, “Oh,” could be heard clear across the room. “Is that what you want to do?” Ms. Bess questioned Isaiah. “No,” he said. “All right,” Ms. Bess continued, “if you want to stand on principle, Isaiah, then I will accept your death.” Ms. Bess had begun to move on, but Desmond yelled, “I have a question” twice to stop her. “Who are you acting like, Hitler or something, or are you just like a person?” Desmond’s outcry indicated discomfort many students were most likely experiencing as a result of Ms. Bess’s dual roles. Ms. Bess began to respond, when James interrupted with an answer, “She’s like the SS.” This gave Ms. Bess a split-second to think. “I’m a teacher,” she declared. “I’m the teacher of this activity.” As the students left class that day a little while later, Ms. Bess commented to me, “Finally, a little emotion!”

Although Ms. Bess was pleased that the students had expressed themselves emotionally in this class, it was clear to me that most students had been emotionally invested in the simulation throughout its duration. Ms. Bess had ingeniously cultivated the students' identification with their characters from the outset, such that they became emotionally invested in their characters' fictional "lives." Layered onto this personal attachment was the thrill of never knowing what would come next. The constant surprise of the simulation made James consider Ms. Bess's class to be "different" from other teachers' and caused Vanessa to think of simulating as "nerve-wracking." For Calypso, the simulation had the surprising power to drag her into class on a day when she had stayed home sick. Generating and sustaining the students' engagement in the scenario was thus both their emotional investment in their characters and the unpredictability of their characters' fates; the simulation held the excitement of danger, though, of course, without actual physical consequences.

The emotional consequences, however, carried their own hidden costs. This class session stood out in many of the students' minds. As Vanessa described the day, "Ms. Bess seemed kind of mean just like throwing [Adrienne] in there." In fact, Ms. Bess's unilateral decision to "arrest" Adrienne had been made in such a way as to seem to Vanessa as though Ms. Bess had "just changed character." "That's what I thought," Vanessa continued, "I didn't want to talk to her afterwards; she seemed scary." Ms. Bess's role-switching had become confusing, at least to Vanessa and probably to many more students as well, jeopardizing the students' trust in their teacher even when the simulation was not in play. I doubted if any of Ms. Bess's students would have felt comfortable turning to her at this point in the semester for advice, help, care, or any of the kinds of counseling teachers often provide.

The next day, Ms. Bess devoted 15 minutes to *Gestapo* before giving out the "Happy Times" unit test. Showing another video clip from *Schindler's List*, Ms. Bess assigned the death in the scene, the shooting of a Jewish woman engineer who had dared to speak directly to an SS man, to a character in the simulation. She then explained what *Kapos* were, illustrating their cruelty through a survivor's story.¹⁰ Ms. Bess wanted Adrienne to play the role of a *Kapo*. "What if I don't?" Adrienne asked. "I won't tolerate that," Ms. Bess replied, elaborating, "You're thirty-four, you're a doctor, and you didn't do the typhus report." Ms. Bess implied a threat, but quickly turned the decision over to the class at large: "Class, should she do it?" Conversation erupted from all sides of the room, with various voices vying for the floor: "She should do it," Desmond hurled. "No she shouldn't," Alyana suggested. "If it's gonna keep her alive, she should," Desmond retorted. "She's got her dignity though, and that's all she's got left," Calypso chimed in. "But she's gonna die if she doesn't," someone else argued. Discussion erupted everywhere in the room for a moment before Adrienne herself yelled out, "No!" Ms. Bess, unflustered, announced that

Thomas, an Asian-American student, would be the *Kapo*. Thomas did not object, even when asked to choose the next victim, whose death would result from I. G. Farben's testing of Zyklon B gas. Four points were recorded for the students who attended that day, and the unit tests were distributed.

The students had been studying the next unit, "America Fights the Good War," for a few days in succession when, that Tuesday, Ms. Bess told the students to clear their desks and get ready for a 12-point day. The students understood this to mean that *Gestapo* would take up most, if not all, of the class period. "We're going to be back in 1942 all day today," Ms. Bess announced by way of introduction. "Let's review, because it's been a long time since . . ." she began. "Since we died," Jonny cut in, finishing her sentence. Though he was clearly making a joke, Jonny's remark revealed a kind of weariness among the students. The simulation was taking its toll on their spirits. Ms. Bess summarized where each of the "living" characters was situated by pulling out their identity cards from the canisters; 14 characters were "in hiding"; seven were "in the ghetto," including Thomas and Isaiah; some were "in slave labor camps"; and the rest had "emigrated." Luke was absent, and though he and his mother had "emigrated" to Palestine, Ms. Bess "killed" both "of natural causes."

"By the way," she remarked, "Adrienne, I didn't have a chance to ask you last time why you didn't want to be a *Kapo*." Adrienne responded quietly, "Because I didn't want to have to kill people." "Even though it's just a gesture, some paper thing, a name on the wall?" Ms. Bess pressed, pointing out the artificiality of the simulation itself. "It bothered you that much?" Adrienne nodded. "Thomas, you didn't seem to have a problem," Ms. Bess continued. "What do you say to Adrienne's objection?" Thomas shrugged his shoulders as he answered, "I'm just thinking like pretty realistically, [and] I think if my life was on the line and I was gonna be killed if I didn't do that, I'd do anything to save my own life." Ms. Bess turned this answer on Adrienne, partly as a question and partly as a challenge, saying, "You would not do anything to save your own life?" Adrienne responded, "no." Ms. Bess reconciled their two positions in a rhetorical move I found both graceful and troubling.

These are two parts of humans. There's not a right or wrong. I respect Adrienne's position; I understand Thomas'. I'm not sure I'd be any different than Thomas; I'd like to believe that I would be like Adrienne, but I don't know. In reality, I don't know if I was given a choice. I know many of you—James, I'm real clear on, you'd be with Thomas, right? [James nods.] One, I'd like to know that I live in a world where there are more Adrienne's, but I don't. I know that each one of us has an Adrienne part, but we [don't always] listen to it. And circumstances definitely affect us.

Ms. Bess's answer was graceful in that she managed to weave these two positions into the fabric of each, single human being; I also found her

willingness to admit her own uncertainty admirable. I like to think that none of us who didn't live through the Holocaust knows what we would have done when faced with the harrowing moral dilemmas it presented, and I appreciated Ms. Bess stating as much. Problematically, though, Ms. Bess was speaking from the role of teacher here, not simulator, and while she was helping students to understand the choices made by historical actors and to clarify their own value systems, she was also hurling at them appraisals of their moral fiber, casting them into restrictive models of behavior, and claiming to know how they would react to a truly unknowable situation. Ironically, Ms. Bess was claiming to know better how the students would react than how she herself would, the result of her privileged position controlling the simulation rather than participating in it.

Ms. Bess then solicited random students' opinions about whether they would align with Adrienne's or Thomas's position. At one point, James commented that "the girls" seemed to choose Adrienne's and "the guys," Thomas's. "You didn't have a problem being the *Judenrat*, and some people have died because of your assistance; has that bothered you?" Ms. Bess asked Isaiah. "I didn't know what it was at first," Isaiah answered, and the room dissolved in laughter. By this point in the simulation, it was hard for the students to remember not being familiar with the Jewish Council. Ms. Bess tied this rejoinder in by saying, "I don't think the *Judenrats* knew exactly what they were gonna be asked to do, Isaiah." James added, "They probably thought they were gonna help people at first," and Isaiah confirmed, "That's what I thought, too." "Well, you wanna quit?" Ms. Bess asked him, her tone slightly changed to indicate that she was now acting as simulator. Fearing the consequences of agreeing, Isaiah said, "No."

That same day, Ms. Bess held a "roll call" for all the "Jews in the ghetto" and for all of the "Jews in hiding." The third and final "roll call" of the day was planned for the Jews "in the slave labor camp." As the first groups had, they would have to run down the tarmac, up the stairs, and into the darkened classroom to find their envelopes from around the room. I recall distinctly that when Ms. Bess opened the door for the first "roll call," the sunshine that poured in seemed incongruous. Ms. Bess was sending these students outside the class to line up by the far bench when Ashisha refused. A tall and almost always elegantly dressed young black woman, Ashisha had worn stylish, five-inch-high, 1970s platform sandals that day and she preferred to have her character die rather than run in those heels.

The end of the simulation came quickly. In the seventh week, Ms. Bess showed a video clip from *War and Remembrance* (1988) that had a graphic portrayal of Jewish victims entering Auschwitz Concentration Camp. The scene follows a fictional Jewish woman and her elderly father as they are routed for slave labor and gassing respectively, and the scene doesn't end until the father's ashes are shown flowing into the river. The clip took a

grueling 20 minutes to watch. Just as it had started, an announcement was read over the PA system about a statewide science exam, and four students, including Thomas, left the room. The video clip ended with a few minutes left of class time. The stunned students were asked to fill in their censuses as Ms. Bess announced the “deaths” of three of the four test-takers whose characters were still “alive.”

The last day of *Gestapo* started out like many other classes had. The students handed in oral history projects, from which Ms. Bess asked them to share highlights. Then, she took care of class business and engaged students’ random questions. At 12:55, she announced that this would be the “final day” of *Gestapo*. She described the infamous death marches, illustrating the facts powerfully with another survivor’s story. Ernie Hollander, an inmate originally from the Carpathian Mountain region of Hungary, had had to bury those who died on the death march from Auschwitz to Dachau, sometimes even those who were not yet dead. “He was a killer if he was gonna bury people alive,” James blurted out. “No, he had no choice,” Ms. Bess corrected. She told James that “Ernie had turned off his heart,” after having watched his father and brothers murdered in the camp. “If you felt anything, you’d die,” she told the class. Ernie and a few fellow inmates finally ran away from the column of marchers to hide in the cupboards of an abandoned kitchen. Days later, they heard English spoken, and though they were initially afraid of the Japanese faces they saw, they were eventually convinced that these were Japanese-American soldiers liberating them, literally, from the cabinets. After telling Ernie’s story, Ms. Bess announced the names of some “survivors” in the class: Ryan and Lee had survived in Denmark; Desmond and his mother had survived in Palestine; Isaiah, Adrienne, Pepe, and three Cherished Ones were on the death march; Vanessa and her Cherished Ones and all the other remaining characters were in hiding. Ms. Bess wanted 15 students of the 60 represented (either in the class or as Cherished Ones) to “survive,” the number corresponding to the 25 percent aggregate of European Jewry who survived until liberation.

Ms. Bess took a moment to double check her numbers before allowing four of the characters on the “death march” to “live.” This left Isaiah and Thomas, the symbolic *Judenrat*, in limbo, as both had Cherished Ones, only one of whom was allowed to “survive.” Thomas had a Cherished One on the “death march” and was thus participating in order to “save” her; Isaiah had himself and his mother to keep “alive.” To simulate the march, Ms. Bess had each of the two students stand on one foot while watching the videotaped testimony of another survivor’s death march experience and subsequent liberation. The film footage was powerful, and the students watched both the video and their two classmates standing to watch it in the darkened room. Ms. Bess encouraged Isaiah and Thomas, saying, “You’re doing great,” and “I’m very proud of you.” As the clip ended, however, she required each to take three hops forward, and then each to

take three hops backwards, switching roles. "Where is it hurting you?" she asked both, and both indicated their up-held feet. "Can I go to the bathroom?" asked James, disrupting the drama of his peers' bodily pain with his own ordinary needs. "No, nobody move out of respect for Isaiah and Thomas," Ms. Bess commanded. Isaiah and Thomas stood, immovable, as Ms. Bess had each of the characters in hiding recite the fourth passage they were to have memorized. All of them "survived" after reciting flawlessly, and their classmates noted in their censuses whether they had had false identification or were in hiding.

Twenty minutes had passed since the start of the video when Ms. Bess realized that Jonny, whose character was in hiding, was absent, and that, therefore, both Isaiah and Thomas could "survive." They released their feet with obvious relief. Ms. Bess continued to list the "survivors" by number and name, listing the circumstances of each. "Vanessa survived, which is not surprising," she read out, repeating the information for the students' censuses. "Number 309 survived with false identification in hiding." At the end of the count, however, Alyana pointed out to Ms. Bess that she had miscounted. There were actually 16 characters left "alive," not 15. "Nooooo!" Ms. Bess cried out, audibly annoyed. Immediately, she regained her composure, saying, "Ok, then, we'll have sixteen. I'm not going to do it again." The toll the simulation had taken on Ms. Bess was evident in her remark. "So we're done with *Gestapo*?" a student queried. "Almost," she replied.

DEBRIEFING

One by one, Ms. Bess encouraged the "survivors" of the simulation to speak, to take a moment to thank anyone or anything that helped them through. Ms. Bess interspersed questions. When it was Pepe's turn, he thanked Alyana, Adrienne, and Jonny. "Did you cheat?" Ms. Bess asked, and Pepe answered "yes." He told me later that he was not immediately forthcoming with the particulars because he still felt slightly suspicious that Ms. Bess would change roles and "punish" him in some way. But when she asked how he had cheated, he did answer, proudly for having "pulled it off." "I never paid my fees to immigrate," Pepe explained, continuing, "You never asked me for the money; I just walked up, told you I had paid and rolled." "Kill him," one student joked, and laughter erupted. There was finally no tension in the room. "I'm sure that happened," Ms. Bess noted. "I'm sure there's a historical parallel there."

Vanessa thanked Adrienne for her help at one point, but for the most part shyly refrained from saying much. Ms. Bess tried to draw her out, asking if the memorization was tough for her to master and which stanza was hardest, but Vanessa answered quietly that the stanzas "all seemed the same" and weren't hard to learn. Isaiah, usually reticent in class, thanked

many, including Adrienne and Hatsue who helped him “when [he] didn’t have no money like to emigrate.” He hadn’t cheated. Adrienne thanked Alyana, Jonny, Desmond, and Ms. Bess’s teaching aide, a senior student who had sat at the front of the room, wordlessly grading quizzes or arranging papers. “How did Tina [the aide] help you?” Ms. Bess asked her, and it was clear from the surprise in the room that the other students were eager to know, too. “She put my number on Alyana’s desk a couple of times,” Adrienne explained, and sometimes Tina had managed to put Adrienne’s number at the top of the deck so that Adrienne had a better idea of where to look in the classroom. It turned out that Adrienne and Tina had become friendly playing on the volleyball team together. “Does it anger the rest of you that Tina helped Adrienne?” Ms. Bess asked, and both nods and frowns greeted the question. Adrienne didn’t feel guilty about it. “All of you who helped,” Ms. Bess pronounced, “you may not be alive, but you let other people live.” Desmond thanked many and had not cheated. Ms. Bess credited him for having “stuck it out” despite his numerous medical appointments. Isaiah had managed to keep himself and *two* Cherished Ones “alive,” and Ms. Bess started to say, “You’re the best” but corrected herself, “the luckiest one.” The student victims, those who didn’t “survive” the simulation, didn’t share their reactions.

I found this last discussion about the simulation disappointing. I wished that the class would have tackled what Ms. Bess had called the “historical parallels” explicitly, such questions as: Was there a moral victory in having “survived” the simulation? Does one’s integrity have anything to do with one’s fate—in both the spiritual and earthy senses of the word—in the simulation? Was cheating or lying acceptable in order to “survive”? “All of you who helped,” Ms. Bess had pronounced, “you may not be alive, but you let other people live”; the question left hanging was what this statement meant morally. Was Ms. Bess saying students should have helped each other even though their characters may not have benefited? At issue is the question of transferability; the extent to which the lessons of the simulation were transferable, or applicable, to the students’ real lives was never addressed. Instead, Ms. Bess left the implicit, tough, moral, and existential issues hanging, leaving her students to draw their own conclusions, if they considered the questions at all. When is cheating or lying warranted? What does “survival,” or possibly its modern American counterpart, “success,” mean at the expense of someone else’s? Is “survival” worth any price? How ought people respond in the face of inhumanity, injustice, brutality, or suffering? And, why didn’t the “victims” share their experiences? Was Ms. Bess equating winning/surviving with the power to speak?

These questions, hovering at the edges of the conversation, constitute what I consider a missed opportunity, but a minor one, because they were left hanging in what was otherwise a unit rich in discussions of morality; for the most part, allowing students the opportunity to engage in moral deliberation with some sense of consequence was part and parcel of Ms.

Bess's typical teaching practice, a significant accomplishment in and of itself.¹¹ Moreover, the discussions in Ms. Bess's class had real consequences. The thorny moral dilemmas Ms. Bess pushed her students to confront were not hypothetical ones, but impacted the characters' fates in the simulation. The discussion students commandeered over the rightness of Adrienne's not wanting to become a *Kapo* comes to mind easily. Because it was so much a part of Ms. Bess's teaching practice, it was surprising to see her not connect what was revealed in the debriefing session to the students' modern contexts in the same way. Given her facility with conducting discussions of morally complex issues, it is easy to imagine Ms. Bess skillfully pushing the students to reflect on the transferability of the simulation's moral lessons. Regardless of the explanation for why Ms. Bess didn't, though, it is relatively inconsequential given her typical teaching practice. Although the debriefing had not engaged students in sophisticated moral deliberation, other key moments in the simulation certainly had. Ms. Bess had frequently confronted the students with morally intricate stories, anecdotes, and events, lacing Holocaust history with dimensions of moral complexity that rarely appear in history classrooms. Ms. Bess' students had learned about this history by investigating much of its moral richness.

In closing, Ms. Bess showed a two-minute video of survivor Gerda Weissman Klein's acceptance speech at the 1995 Academy Awards.¹² Despite the music swelling to cue Klein to stop speaking, Klein refused to forgo her brief remarks and dedicated her award "to all my friends who have died who will never know the magic of a boring night at home." The Hollywood glitterati in attendance gave her a standing ovation, and Ms. Bess stopped the video, reiterating Klein's message for her students. "No one's trying to kill you; lice aren't trying to bite you; you're not on a transport; you're not in Mengele's lab," she said, encouraging them to recognize the quality of their own lives by contrast. She didn't want them to take the "gifts" of their circumstances lightly. James interrupted.

Everyone's like that, though. You always take for granted what you have; it's just human nature. . . . I don't think, like, that my life's better off than people in the Holocaust. I mean, I can think like that in school, but not outside of it. You can't think like that all the time.

In this brief response, I saw that one of Ms. Bess's goals, at least for this student, had been met. Although Ms. Bess may not have recognized a victory in James's remarks, his implication was that he had been provoked to consider his life in these terms at least while in her class.

The rest of that week, the students learned about the end of the war in Japan, debating the options Truman confronted and voting against dropping the bomb without warning the Japanese. The Monday of the ninth week, the 'survivors' of the simulation handed in their decorated envelopes for Ms. Bess to post on the wall. Then, small groups of students "buddied

up” to quiz each other for the final exam, which they took that same day. Ms. Bess handed out the “free answers” to “survivors” of the simulation; the students who had “survived” themselves or “saved” a Cherished One needed only to circle the questions they did not want to answer for up to the number of points they had won in the simulation. Students received 15 free points for “surviving” themselves and an additional 10 points for each “surviving” Cherished One.

Because she had many students, little time, and minimal assistance in grading students’ work, Ms. Bess relied wholly on short-answer quizzes and exams throughout the semester, and the final exam was no different. I was surprised, though, when the exam reduced even the experiential dimensions of the simulation to testable information. In one section of the final, for example, Ms. Bess asked a series of questions that required students to regurgitate simulation information such as: “Exactly how many people in class died on a death march?” “Who died as a result of medical experiments performed by Dr. Mengele?” and “How old was the oldest survivor of the Holocaust?” In a sense, questions like these implied that what happened in the simulation was at least as important to know, if not more so, as what had happened during the Holocaust itself. I was disappointed that the final examination didn’t betray the larger purpose behind the simulation, that is, to teach students about the Holocaust.

In the two days of school after the final exam, attendance predictably dwindled. Ms. Bess showed *Schindler’s List* in its entirety to the few students who showed up for class, and they signed each other’s yearbooks, munching on donuts while the videotape played. Ms. Bess was relieved that the year had ended.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

When I had finished observing Ms. Bess’s class, I was mostly awed by what I considered her tremendous accomplishments while only somewhat concerned about what I saw as missed opportunities. Both the achievements and shortfalls were representational and consequential. Among the significant accomplishments of her unit, I count the high level of engagement Ms. Bess fostered in students, the impressive volume of information she was able to cover and instill in them, the opportunities she structured for them to discuss moral questions, as well as certain aspects of her Holocaust representation. The missed opportunities—among them a short-shrived debriefing and other aspects of the Holocaust representation—pale in importance by comparison.

To get a sense of class reaction to Ms. Bess, to the course as a whole, and to the simulation in particular, I administered two surveys to the students during class time. The first survey was distributed on the first day of class, Monday, April 14; the second was distributed on the last day of class

before the final exam, Friday, June 6. The students' responses to the class assessment section of the second survey serve as an indicator of their overall engagement in the simulation. All the students reported liking Ms. Bess's course; all 23 students who took the final survey circled "Yes" when asked as much. In addition, almost all the students, 91.3 percent of them, agreed that "Ms. Bess is a great teacher." The students also unanimously agreed on three other items that point toward their approval of the experience: that they would recommend this course to friends of theirs, that they would recommend studying the Holocaust to friends of theirs, and that there was nothing they had expected or wanted to learn about the Holocaust in this course that they hadn't. The students also almost unanimously agreed on the way to learn about the Holocaust. Almost all of the students, 22 of the 23 who took the final survey, responded affirmatively when asked whether they had liked studying about the Holocaust by simulating. In short, the students had enjoyed the course, felt they had learned much, and, I would argue, had gained a sense of the importance of the topic itself.

The students had also learned basic information about the Holocaust. Given the same list of eight Holocaust-related terms to define on both surveys, the students' scores improved greatly. The average score on this identification task in the first survey is 2.73, whereas it is 5.9 on the second. Likewise, the median score on the first survey is 3, whereas it moves up to 6 on the second. Moreover, many students were able to identify the more sophisticated terms on the second survey than had been able to on the first, and the quality of the definitions supplied improved on the second survey; more details were included, such as names and dates. The four students I interviewed repeatedly over the course of the semester—Calypso, James, Pepe, and Vanessa—could also easily explain by the end of the course how Hitler rose to power and what countries fought in World War II. As Calypso explained, before taking Ms. Bess's class, she knew "that there was a Holocaust, and there was a guy named Adolf Hitler, and he didn't like Jews, and he tried to kill 'em all," but "that was basically all." This was a far cry from what she could discuss at the end of the course.

More impressive to me than the amount of information students learned, however, was the way they had learned it. The students in Ms. Bess's class had learned about this history by becoming emotionally engaged in it. Serving as at least a partial indicator of the rest of their peers, all four focus students had been emotionally struck by the tragic dimensions of the Holocaust while learning new information. For Vanessa and Calypso, the emotional experience of the simulation overshadowed the impact of their informational learning. Although both young women had increased their knowledge as indicated by the increase in their number of identifiable terminology, the core of what they felt they had learned was experiential and emotional, something uneasily put into words or captured

in interviews. Vanessa had been struck by the cruelty of the experience of the Holocaust despite the fact that her characters had survived the simulation; Calypso had been impacted by the tragedy of the Holocaust in overlaying on it her own tragic personal circumstances.

Although Pepe and James didn't readily admit to being emotionally involved in the simulation, that they had been was clear in both cases as well. Both young men spoke in the first-person to describe their characters' fates (as had their classmates); neither made fun of the activity in talking about it to me; and Pepe was quietly proud of his character's survival while James was resentful of and disappointed in his characters' early demise. For these two young men, the emotional impact of the simulation may not have been foremost in their minds as it was for Vanessa and Calypso, but neither was it absent from their assessments. In short, though these young men wouldn't readily admit such, both were moved by the simulation, as had been both young women.

Although these students' reactions only hint at their peers' in the class, I would argue that all the students in the class had been engaged by the simulation. All but one of the 23 students who took the survey at the end of class replied in the affirmative to the question, "Did you like learning about the Holocaust by simulating?"¹³ Embedded within that emotional impact and intense engagement is a necessarily changed attitude toward Jewish victimization and survival during the Holocaust. In the empathy expressed by the four students' in their interviews, by the rest of the students in their answers on the surveys, and in their new understandings of the impossibilities inherent in the situations of European Jewry during the Holocaust, Ms. Bess's goal that her students become "humbled" by this history was fully realized. All four interviewed students had come to recognize the arbitrariness of who survived and who didn't, and all had gained a sense of the magnitude of that tragedy in the fabric of individual lives. Even James, who hadn't consistently taken the simulation seriously, had gained the sense that the events of the Holocaust were unpredictable from the standpoint of the victims.

If that happened to us right now we wouldn't even know it until it was too late, because you don't know—you wouldn't know at first. People didn't know at first 'till it finally got real bad; I don't even think they knew what was happening at Auschwitz 'till the last minute.

Regardless of whether James's assessment is historically accurate,¹⁴ it's clearly a valuable orientation to hold toward innocent victims of atrocity; in his eyes, they were not blame-worthy. The simulation had also taught James the lessons to "value what you have now; [and] live every day, you know, like it's the last one," lessons he had been able to take to heart at least "a little bit" from learning about the victims. When pushed to consider what she thought she had learned from the simulation, Vanessa explained:

I think I feel more sad because I kind of experienced it, and it felt kind of like nerve-wracking; you didn't know what would happen and stuff. Before, I was learning from the notes, so I'm just not really feeling anything, but then when I experienced it, I did.

["Even though you survived?" I asked her.]
Yah. . . I feel lucky.

In an earlier interview, Vanessa had expressed similar reactions. She felt she had been learning about a Jewish experience of the Holocaust, the experience of "fear and terror, not knowing what'll happen; not knowing if you'll see the next day." For her, the moral lesson of the Holocaust was simple; "Everybody should treat everybody as an equal, an equal person, and like, that's it."

CONCLUSIONS

Ms. Bess had taught these kinds of lessons in part by skillfully balancing individual stories with collective experience such that these students, and I suspect many other students as well, understood both the larger historical context and its impact on real people's lives. To represent this history fairly, some notion of the large numbers of victims, Jewish and otherwise, needs to be conveyed; in order to bring it to life, however, a sense of the individuality of every victim who survived or didn't also warrants dedicated coverage. These two forces work at cross-purposes. Ms. Bess, in structuring the simulation as the entanglement of 60 individual lives, kept these two tendencies in a kind of perfect tension, such that students determined to some extent what happened to individuals, but understood it in the context of multitudes. Furthermore, the students had learned these lessons by psychologically identifying with both imagined Jewish lives and actual (if fictionalized) Jewish fates during the Holocaust, as Ms. Bess used both in constructing the simulation. The four focus students, in describing their "own" Jewish life stories in the first person, and the other students in the class, who also used first-person language throughout the simulation, exhibited that they had learned to think of themselves as Jews living under persecution, if only for the space and time of the simulation. Why is this so remarkable?

Getting the students to metaphorically "step into the shoes" of other peoples' experience was an accomplishment in itself, a rare move for teenagers, and not one that is easily manipulated or artificially manufactured. Rather than reifying stereotypically negative or Nazi propagated images of Jews, the simulation's structure implicitly battled against them. Ms. Bess very easily could have done the opposite; she could easily have taught Holocaust history from the perspective of the perpetrators, a phenomenon that probably occurs more frequently than not at the high-school level. After my first few years of teaching this subject, I realized that in

my own courses, the students finished my Holocaust unit having viewed only negative images of Jews, that is, stereotyped, propagandistic, and Nazi-generated ones or ones in which Jews were degraded, humiliated, and dehumanized, standing at the edges of mass graves or lying entangled within them. I had assumed that by viewing such images, my students would automatically empathize with such victims. I still believe that in order to understand Holocaust history thoroughly, students need to confront these images; they need to understand how Nazi ideology, legislation, and activity vilified Jews, and such images are thus illustrative. However, by not showing positive, realistic images of living, "normal" Jews (materials, which, by the way, are much harder to come by), I believe that inadvertently I may have perpetuated or helped entrench negative stereotypes of Jews. Two of the four students I interviewed from Ms. Bess's class, after all, had held negative associations with the word "Jew" at the beginning of the semester. Unlike my past students, however, Ms. Bess's classroom, full of non-Jewish students, left her simulation with the notions that the stories of Jewish lives are as individual as the students in the class and that Jews are as "normal" as they themselves, by no means a small or usual accomplishment.

This normalized representation of Jews, however, bore hidden, consequential costs. What this normalization necessarily obviated was the history of pre-Holocaust (religious) anti-Semitism, arguably foundational for a deep understanding of Holocaust history. In shaping historical Jewish lives during the Holocaust to fit in with students' own self-representations, the history of anti-Semitism was necessarily neglected. To make Jews seem "normal" to the students, to make Jewish people from history seem like these students in the present, the history of anti-Semitism was overlooked or bypassed. Put another way, it would have been very difficult to represent Jews as similar to non-Jewish students if more of their differences—embodied in Jewish rituals, traditions, beliefs, and history, including the history of anti-Semitism—had been more fully emphasized. As a result, none of the four focus students, and probably none of the other students in the class, understood the larger historical context that caused Jews to be the main group targeted by Nazi policy and action.

When pushed to explain why Jews were targeted, Calypso responded that anti-Semitism had probably started with the Nazi party and that the scapegoating of Jews was more of a power play than a particular hatred. "I don't know why," James had responded when asked the same question. When pressured, he ventured an answer that involved the Jews as a convenient scapegoat in the immediate situation. "I guess that they needed a scapegoat; and then, I guess they were only one percent, but they had a lot of business and money and stuff—I guess they took it out on them, I don't know why," he repeated. Long pauses in Vanessa's response indicated to me that she was struggling to find an answer she didn't have. "I didn't really understand that; I thought that . . . , I think they targeted them

because they thought they were inferior because, . . . I'm not sure why though. . . . Maybe it was because they were such a small group?" Like Calypso and James, Vanessa had not learned to view this instance of scapegoating in the wider context of historical anti-Semitism.

Ms. Bess may have neglected this thread of Holocaust history because it was not part of her original curriculum. Alternatives in Religious Education (ARE), the publishers of *Gestapo: A Learning Experience About the Holocaust*, is a Jewish publishing house that designs and markets educational materials specifically geared for Jewish contexts. (In fact, *Gestapo* is the only educational material that ARE markets in a non-Jewish arena, *Social Studies School Service*, a national distributor of educational materials from which Ms. Bess first ordered the simulation). It is quite likely that the original game, though it doesn't say so in its introduction, was designed with a Jewish audience in mind. The writers, Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin, Audrey Friedman Marcus, and Leonard Kramish, may have assumed that by the time Jewish teens "simulated" this game, they would already have been familiarized with historical anti-Semitism. This may be one of the liabilities of Ms. Bess's considerable creativity. In having based her curriculum on a game originally designed as an educational supplement only, a crucial piece of history was left out.

In our final interview, Calypso exhibited another knowledge gap that troubled her. She recognized that she had no idea whether "the Jewish community had tried to do anything in their defense," and if so, what and how. "That's like a question I started really having towards the end [of the simulation]" Calypso added, continuing:

I don't believe that this is a group of like completely weak people that just let somebody come in and dominate their lives. Granted, it probably happened 'cause they didn't have any power, political, but I don't think they just let it happen. They must have done something!

. . . If we have Americans now that go out and put their lives on the line in war, I'm sure there were some Jewish people that put their lives on the line for their people too. People do that all the time. I don't know if I'm strong enough to do that, but it's part of human nature.

Alghouth she may not have had the historical information about Jewish partisans and resisters, interestingly, Calypso's moral learning here dwarfed her informational gap. Calypso's pondering reveals an internalized, "normalized" image of Jews and a faith in the commonalities across human groups. To Calypso, European Jews living then were as brave (and as cowardly), in sum as various, as Americans living now, an equivalence I consider to be positive, whether or not historically precise. Calypso had learned about Jewish victimization, if not in all its historical complexity, at least in meaningful, moral depth.

Although I have argued above that part of the genius of Ms. Bess's simulation was the framework of students' learning this history from the

perspective of its main group of victims (Jews), this structure posed other problematic implications. Perhaps rightly so, given the historical centrality of Jewish victimization in the Holocaust, Ms. Bess's simulation nonetheless didn't prompt students to consider the plight of non-Jewish victims of Nazism: the Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, Polish intelligentsia, the so-called hereditarily ill, and asocial, and so forth. More importantly, perhaps, the students were not encouraged to connect the fates of their Jewish characters to the role of bystanders and non-Jewish collaborators in this history, but only directly to the role of perpetrators and Jewish cooperators as represented by Ms. Bess and her instruments. The role of the bystander, therefore, a "naturally" more invisible role than that of the perpetrator or victim, remained invisible to students.

As previously mentioned, the discussion devoted to debriefing the simulation and the final exam marked other missed opportunities for deepening students' learning. Rather than mining the simulation's moral complexities and discussing the transferability of its moral lessons, the debriefing session was overly brief. And, rather than assessing students' knowledge of the Holocaust, the section devoted to the subject in Ms. Bess's final exam focused instead on what students had learned about the simulation itself. The experiential richness of the simulation was thus slighted by a fact-based, multiple-choice assessment.

Indeed, one reason Calypso stopped liking Ms. Bess's course as much as she had at its beginning was because of this emphasis on the factual. When Calypso's grades plummeted near the end of the semester, she explained the slump by saying that she had become bored by the class, feeling that her "other classes were just so much more interesting." In Ms. Bess's class, the assignments were all the same to Calypso; they all emphasized gaining factual knowledge over expressing personal opinions, and as such, "they never made you think." Referring to the recitations that "hiding Jews" had to perform, Calypso made the sophisticated analogy, "that's like, after a while, how the whole class seemed to me," a rote performance of regurgitated information. "That was like a perfect example of how she taught everything; either you know it or you don't know it." Despite this sharp criticism, however, Calypso had felt that the simulation was worthwhile—even given its emotional hardship for her. She felt she had learned deeply, though it was not reflected in her grade, and she was thankful for the experience, though she felt estranged from Ms. Bess.

As far as I am concerned, this last point highlights the most distressing aspect of the simulation, its greatest consequential problem: that Ms. Bess's role as authoritative dictator in the simulation compromised her role as caring teacher in the classroom. Ms. Bess did not know about Calypso's boyfriend, for example, until reading the first draft of this case study (well after the end of the school year). Had I not been researching her simulation, in other words, she would likely never have known about the emotional upheaval the simulation caused Calypso to relive. Researchers and

educational theorists have long bemoaned the lack of intimacy that characterizes large, public secondary schools. And though the structure of schooling is largely to blame for the isolation students often feel—in features such as the large numbers of students teachers teach, the compartmentalization of the school day, the focus on subject matter rather than students at the secondary level—certainly the simulation itself exacerbated such tendencies. Whether or not Ms. Bess would have been able to serve as a comfort to Calypso had the simulation not occurred is of course unknowable; what is clear is that the simulation prevented Calypso and probably her peers from considering Ms. Bess even a potential school ally, the importance of which cannot be underestimated (Noddings, 1992; Palmer, 1993; Pope, 2001). That Calypso could feel unknown, however much predicated on the structure of schooling more generally, was certainly intensified by the role Ms. Bess played as persecutor.

The moral tradeoffs of Ms. Bess's simulation are thus quite complex. When I first entered Ms. Bess's classroom with elaborate biases against simulations, I am sure that I was unaware of just how morally complicated they necessarily are. Although I did not leave Ms. Bess's simulation less wary of the potential pitfalls of all simulations, my admiration for the successes of this particular simulation overwhelmed my prejudices, leaving me with far more interesting questions than the pat answers with which I began.

Before studying Ms. Bess's class, I had thought that a simulation format would be "fun" for students and thus trivialize the seriousness of the Holocaust, that the consequences of its game-like features would compromise its representation to students. What I came to realize after observing the class, however, is that student engagement should not be mistaken for student enjoyment; the fact that students used the word "fun" to describe their experience did not mean that they weren't taking the subject matter seriously. That they had "fun" (of a sort) in simulating didn't mean that they viewed the Holocaust as being "fun." They simply lacked a language to express respectful, wholehearted engagement.

I had also believed that students engaged in a simulation would mistake what they experienced for "the real thing." I thought they would consider their experience in the simulation to be an exact replica rather than a remote representation of actual events. Ms. Bess's students, however, were clearly able to draw differentiations. As Vanessa explained to me, she was aware of the differences between the students' experience of the simulation and Jews' experiences of the Holocaust even while simulating; to her, the simulation served as a glimpse rather than a totality. "I don't really know what happened back then," she explained, "but I have a little idea about what did happen; . . . [the simulation is] not as big as what really happened, but it's kind of a short introduction to what *could* have happened." Not only did she understand the historical and psychological distance between the simulation and its historical anchor, she understood

the fiction that the simulation generated. Even in our first interview, when the simulation had just started, she saw the differences, explaining that in the simulation, “You just get to—not really feel like it, ‘cause I could never feel how they did, but try to take a little part of how they were treated in those days.” Although Ms. Bess’s evaluation of student learning didn’t reflect it, the simulation was an imaginative venue rather than an end in itself.

Finally, I had come into Ms. Bess’s class with the presumption that a simulation’s emotional intensity would necessarily eclipse the intellectual dimensions of the learning. I came to understand, however, that at least in Ms. Bess’s class, the experiential and intellectual components of the simulation were mutually reinforcing. The obvious informational learning that went on in Ms. Bess’s class was, for the most part, enhanced by its simulation format and vice versa. The term, *Judenrat*, marks an interesting exception. The definition for the term that students supplied on the second survey reflects the power of the simulation over the impact of dictated information in shaping their knowledge bases. Most students defined the term *Judenrat* through reference to its form in the simulation rather than to the definition dictated by Ms. Bess; that is, they defined *Judenrat* as a single person rather than a council of “elders” played by a single actor in the simulation. In general, however, one clear power of the simulation may be that it challenged students’ minds by engaging their hearts and challenged their hearts by engaging their minds; the moral and informational dimensions of this simulation were inextricably fused (Ball & Wilson, 1996; Simon, 2001).

Ms. Bess’s simulation format spelled out the possibility for students to deliberate very powerful moral dilemmas with a sense of real consequences. In its emotional intensity, the simulation also provided students with a deep learning opportunity, to be personally engaged in studying history, to be passionate about its results. To set up such a simulation and play it out, acting as an enemy, alternately authoritarian, arbitrary, and helpful, is no mean feat for a teacher, and neither psychically untaxing nor morally uncompromising. It is for these reasons that I am so very impressed with Ms. Bess still, though my enthusiasm for simulations in general, and of atrocity simulations in particular, remains tempered.

As such, my research on Ms. Bess’s simulation does not lead me to advocate the use of simulations to teach Holocaust history. Although simulations do not *necessarily* trivialize Holocaust history, nor do they *necessarily* lead students to learn about the Holocaust as a trivialized event, this does not mean that simulations cannot or do not often do so. What I hope is clear from the analysis above is that the crucial distinctions between what might be called constructive and destructive simulations inhere in the particularities of their presentations rather than the generalities of their form. That said, a remaining question arises that is philosophical in nature and carries obvious policy implications, namely: Are there critical attributes

that separate educative simulations from miseducative ones, and if so, what are they? Although it lies outside the realm of this research to state an answer with certainty, I find it tempting to speculate.

In a sense, the power of the simulation described above lies in the magnitude of the fiction it generated. It was ultimately a series of paradoxes in play: a fictional cast of characters that allowed “real” people to come to imaginative life, a partially scripted drama that enlivened a nonscripted historical reality, a simplified narrative that illuminated a multifaceted and barbarously complex history, a series of play-acted events, game-like in quality, which nonetheless lent an emotional seriousness to truly dramatic, tragic, and murderous circumstances. Ironically perhaps, it was the grandeur of Ms. Bess’s fiction that allowed for the authenticity of her results. It may be, in other words, that by virtue of encouraging students to recognize the historical distance between the simulacrum and its historical referent, a simulation that is full enough to generate its own emotional “reality” is less conducive to trivializing history than one that is too short-lived or too poorly executed to do so. According to this argument, metaphorically, a thin screen overlaid on this history could be more illusory than the plush curtain Ms. Bess’s simulation threw before it. The density of Ms. Bess’s historical coverage, the fabric she wove, made substantial her simulation’s “reality,” substantial enough for students to see what was hidden and exposed behind the curtain, to understand the fictiveness of their classroom creation and, ultimately, to recognize its inability to represent more than a fiction of the past.

Ms. Bess’s simulation worked, in other words, as does a good film, a fine piece of literature, a great story, even a work of qualitative research, which brings into being, at least temporarily, an imaginative world, if not in its entirety, then with the implication of such. In the words of Lee Shulman (1992), “The well-crafted case instantiates the possible.” Ms. Bess’s simulation, by functioning as provocative theatre, created a powerful fiction that never attempted to represent history *exactly*, but rather strove to “instantiate . . . [a] possible” history of the Holocaust in her students’ minds. In short, it is mistaken to judge the simulation by the sole criterion of historical verisimilitude; simulations, by their very nature, cannot duplicate historical events nor even represent them authentically but rather form their own versions of those histories. What I am suggesting, then, is that historical simulations be judged by their approximations of historical accuracy, definitely, but that they be judged as well by the criteria used in assessing performative arts, called to answer such questions as: Does it (the drama, the simulation) cohere? Does it engage one’s attention throughout? Does it provoke thought—in this case about history, about morality, and about humanity?

According to one staff member at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, people frequently call the Museum’s education department seeking the dimensions of the rail cars used to transport Holocaust victims

to the concentration and “extermination” camps. “We don’t give them out,” I was told. Why? Because presumably such callers are teachers and:

Because I know they’re going to take masking tape and go in the gym and mark off the size of a rail car and jam all of [the students] in there, explain what the death trains were like. . . . [of course] with the best of intentions. But what does that teach? It doesn’t teach them about a death train; it teaches them about being crowded for five minutes together. . . .

I don’t dispute the wisdom underlying this decision; indeed, I support it. The mental image of giggling teenagers aping tragedy is patently offensive. And yet, isn’t it possible that learning about “being crowded for five minutes together,” *if done seriously* as part of a richly based historical unit, could help students understand victims’ experiences on those trains? And, in turn, couldn’t that albeit limited and compromised understanding pave the way for students to gain fuller knowledge, even eventual wisdom about the Holocaust?

Ms. Bess’s simulation, though hardly generalizeable, nonetheless “instantiated the possible” for her students, allowing us to recognize that simulations, even simulations of atrocity, like all pedagogical arrangements, pose moral tradeoffs (Cuban, 2001; Hansen, 1995). Done well, they allow students emotional and intellectual access to past events; done poorly, they pose miseducative, indeed harmful, opportunities galore. Although Ms. Bess’s Holocaust simulation was not morally uncomplicated, it was nonetheless impressive enough to change this researcher’s biases against the possibilities of the genre.

NOTES

1. The names of the teacher, students, and locations in this article are pseudonyms, most of which were chosen by the subjects themselves.
2. Both Adorno’s original condemnation of moves to aestheticize the Holocaust through poetic rendering and his later rescinding the approbation have been detailed by numerous authors. See, for example, Felstiner (1995).
3. Here it is important to mention that the category of “what students learn” is problematic, at least in part fundamentally unknowable. As one of the associate editors of this journal noted, when considering what students “actually learn at a deep meaning-making level . . . all we can possibly get . . . are hints, clues and glimpses.” Most of my claims about student learning from and perception of the curriculum are based on interview, survey, and observational data.
4. In the study, eight students’ reactions to and progress through the course were followed and documented. These eight students were selected to represent a range of ethnicities, personal styles, and academic performance. (Four of the

eight, for example, volunteered to be interviewed while four were solicited and strenuously courted. Some of the students participated in class while others barely spoke, etc.) Due to space constraints, only four of the eight are reported on here.

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5. The Jewish population of Germany in 1933 was actually less than 1 percent, closer to 0.5 percent according to most estimates. There were on the order of 522,000 Jews living in Germany at that time (Bauer, 1982, p. 113).
6. In fact, all but one student in the simulation played “full” Jews; one student was later chosen to play the part of a *mischling*, or person of so-called mixed-race heritage.
7. It is useful to recall that this exchange transpired before September 11, 2001, when religious discourse flooded into the market of the U.S. spoken currency.
8. Neither I nor Ms. Bess could locate the origin of this quotation. My apologies to the copyright holder.
9. The roles of the *Judenrate* and their members were more diverse and complex than Ms. Bess implies in this quotation. For a brief review of the *Judenrate* (and Jewish police), see Yehuda Bauer (2000, pp. 143–66).
10. *Kapos* were concentration camp inmates assigned to oversee barracks. Often, criminals were assigned to be *Kapos*. Primo Levi (1960) recounts that if *Kapos* were did not behave cruelly, they did not last long in the position unless they were very skillful at hiding their humanity. The story Ms. Bess relayed to the students was about a *Kapo* who came into a barracks eating fresh sausage, and rather than throwing the remains to the starving inmates therein, threw them to the well-fed SS dogs. Lucille Eichengreen (1994) has published a full account of this recollection and others in her Holocaust memoir, *From Ashes to Life: My Memories of the Holocaust*.
11. In a fascinating study, Katherine Simon (2001) shows that teachers teaching in disciplines across the curriculum rarely, if ever, allow students such opportunities.
12. Gerda Weissman Klein’s (1957) powerful memoir, *All But My Life*, was subsequently made into the documentary film that won the award.
13. It is worth noting that despite the overwhelmingly positive responses on the surveys, however, interview data revealed more nuanced reactions to the simulation, two of which are discussed in the next section. The one student who replied in the negative to the survey prompt, “Did you like learning about the Holocaust by simulating?” gave as the reason that it involved “too much pressure, and I don’t think we will ever know how the Jews really felt.”
14. James’s generalization is too broad to encompass all groups of victims; of course there were those victims who knew what awaited them. In a conference dedicated to open discussion of the controversy Naomi Seidman (1996) stirred up with the publication of her article, “Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage,” Seidman proposed that the overriding image of Jewish Holocaust victims as naively unaware of their fates was propagated in part by the tremendous popularity of Elie Wiesel’s (1982) memoir, *Night*. The hegemony of this

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image of Jewish victimhood, according to Seidman, has disallowed the public to imagine even the possibility of a fully cognizant but militarily defenseless Jewish body (Personal communication, 3/2/97).

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