

INTEGRATING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN A STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

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This research is part of a larger project in which I study ways that people understand and interpret the Holocaust--that is, what they regard as its causes, what frameworks they use to compare the Holocaust with other events, and how much they know about the Holocaust. In this paper, I am turning away from the substantive questions I have been studying to date and reflecting, instead, on the methods that I use to answer them.

In this project, I have been using both survey and qualitative depth interviews with college students as the data sources. In analyzing the data, I am experimenting with different ways that the two approaches could be used together in order to tell the story of what respondents know about the Holocaust and how they come to know it. The examples I provide will largely point to concrete suggestions about ways that qualitative methods can be used to enhance the kind of data analysis that survey researchers typically conduct. However, I will also briefly discuss some ways that survey data can be used to inform qualitative analysis.

Methods

The survey interview data come from a study of a random sample of 512 University of Michigan undergraduates, interviewed face-to-face by myself and students from a research methods class in Fall 1991. The response rate for the survey was 81%. The survey covered several student issue and activity topics, with a seven minute long section of Holocaust questions near the beginning.

The question that I used to measure knowledge about the Holocaust was: "Here is a list of names and places associated with the Holocaust [SHOW CARD]. For each one you've heard of *in connection with the Holocaust*, could you tell me what the connection was? [CARD LISTS THE FOLLOWING NAMES:] Adolf Eichmann, Dachau, Warsaw Ghetto, Anne Frank." I coded the answers to each of these questions as correct or incorrect and summed the results together to make the five-point knowledge scale that is the dependent variable in the survey analysis.

The qualitative data come from a set of

structured depth interviews I conducted in Spring 1992 with 40 students who had been respondents in the earlier survey interviews. Most of these students were chosen on the basis of both their ethnic background (Jewish, German, or a control group of "other European") and their scores on the survey knowledge scale, in order to obtain a mix of knowledge levels within ethnic groups. Additional respondents were chosen to represent groups whose backgrounds or beliefs suggested specific comparisons to the Holocaust--these included students with African American, Armenian, and Japanese backgrounds as well as a few pro-life respondents who rated abortion as a "very good" comparison with the Holocaust in the survey.

In the depth interviews, I asked students to describe ways they had learned about the Holocaust, such as through the media, in conversation with family and friends, in high school or university classes. 75% of the survey respondents contacted were willing to participate in these interviews, which lasted about an hour.

Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

1. Using Qualitative Data to Explain Regression Relationships

Beginning with the survey data alone, I conducted regression analyses to try to predict the knowledge about the Holocaust variable, finding that Jewish students are more knowledgeable about the Holocaust than others, that men are more knowledgeable than women, that newspaper readers know more than non-readers, and so forth. The usual challenge survey researchers face at this point is to add some explanatory power to such findings: to try to go beyond, for example, the fact that gender and knowledge can be connected by lines in a causal model and instead to speculate about the underlying reasons for the connection.

In my study, I used the depth interviews as a way to explore some of the processes underlying the variable relationships, by covering topics at length in the hour long session that would not be feasible to study under the time and cost constraints of a survey interview. In trying to understand the gender difference in knowledge, I found that a theme of

"interest in war" ran through many of the men's interviews but only a few of the women's. Thus, half the men but only one in six of the women I interviewed mentioned that they liked watching war movies, had discussed or read about World War Two, or had taken a university course with some coverage of the War. These gender differences parallel those found by Sigal and Weinfeld (1989).

Looking at the difference in greater depth, I found that for some of the men, the war and Holocaust were important to know about because of their influence on today's political playing field. For example, Frank's¹ first memory of knowing about the Holocaust was of learning in fifth grade how it had influenced national boundaries after the war. For others, war was interesting because it involved strategic decisions: for example, Eric compared it to "games like Risk, involving strategy like that." Even though the information gleaned about the Holocaust as a side-product of learning about the war might be quite superficial—as in war movies where concentration camps are depicted briefly in order to motivate the military plot—many men had large numbers of exposures to such information. Finally, the men more often than the women mentioned feelings of morbid fascination with the Holocaust that led to trying to learn about it. In all these ways, the depth interviews show reasons why men would be more drawn than women to studying the war and Holocaust and why their knowledge levels would accordingly be higher.

2. Using Qualitative Data to Explain Regression Outliers

A second way that I used the qualitative interviews to enhance the regression analysis was to try to account for respondents who would be "outliers" in regression analysis terms. For example, although the regressions indicated that being Jewish was the single most important predictor of knowledge about the Holocaust—with the Jewish students answering (on average) about one more of the four knowledge questions correctly than other students—nevertheless there were some Jewish students who knew rather little about the Holocaust and some non-Jewish students who knew quite a lot. By selecting some of these atypical survey respondents for the depth interviews, I was able to identify some possible explanations that had gone unmeasured in the survey interview.

For the Jewish students with low knowledge

1. Note: all names are pseudonyms chosen by the respondents.

levels, not having attended Hebrew school emerged as a likely explanation. Hebrew school was often the first source of knowledge about the Holocaust for the other Jewish students, who remembered activities like making shoebox dioramas of concentration camps or wearing a yellow star around their synagogue school. The non-Jewish students with unusually high knowledge levels, characteristically described strong personal identities that served as links to the Holocaust. For example, one respondent, Laura, was the granddaughter of Ukrainian concentration camp victims; another, Alan, was concerned throughout the interview with gay men's issues in both the Nazi regime and the United States; and a third, Emily, was a very religious Christian who connected the Holocaust with her deep concerns about abortion and euthanasia.

3. Using Qualitative Interviews to Evaluate a Survey Measure

A quite different way to integrate the depth interviews with the quantitative analysis is to use the depth interviews to evaluate the survey knowledge measure. In the regression analyses I describe above, an underlying assumption is that "knowledge about the Holocaust" can be measured effectively by a scale of four items: Adolf Eichmann, Dachau, the Warsaw Ghetto, and Anne Frank. From the perspective of a quantitative analysis, this scale was developed correctly, by choosing items after a correlation analysis of some 15 pretested possibilities. The Cronbach's alpha calculated for the final scale, .61, is adequate though not especially high.

However, the depth interviews revealed some important dimensions of knowledge about the Holocaust that were not measured by the survey items. For example, returning to the gender issue, although men scored significantly higher than women on the knowledge scale, men and women seemed equally interested in discussing the Holocaust in my depth interviews. Post-survey interview evaluations by the student interviewers show the same paradoxical effect. Moreover, in the depth interviews I discovered that students more often mentioned conversations about the Holocaust with their mothers than with their fathers, and when asked whether they would give a book about the Holocaust to a child, women were more likely to answer in the affirmative than men.

The depth interviews suggest that the contradictory gender differences in knowledge and interest could be explained by a pattern of women's knowledge about the Holocaust that the survey interviews did not measure. Women much more often than men described a feeling of emotional involvement

or empathy with the victims of the Holocaust. For example, Ayako, who had seen a graphic film of the concentration camps said, "they showed some of the trials and tribulations that the Jews had to go through...you got to *really feel* what they went through. In the sense that emotion work, in Arlie Hochschild's (1983) terms, is a kind of knowledge or ability, the women in the depth interviews tended to show a qualitatively different form of knowing about the Holocaust that the men typically did not.

I found a second contrast between the survey and depth interviews for the African-American students. Although they had very low knowledge levels according to the survey measure, these students described a different way of knowing about the Holocaust in which it is viewed as an extension of, or analogous to, the African-American experience of slavery. For example, Robert said, "it just so happened that the Jewish people Hitler picked that day. It didn't have to be Jews that day, you know. I mean, *somewhere, all of us* have been through a quote unquote Holocaust in some sense." From his perspective, the Holocaust is already understood in a way that does not really rely on the information measured by the knowledge scale. A similar result was obtained for one of the Armenian students who scored low on the knowledge scale, but said that the word "Holocaust" evoked both the Jewish and Armenian genocides for him, from the time of his first encounter with the Holocaust in elementary school: "I suddenly found out there was a second world war. I said [to my mother], 'What happened during the Second World War?', referring to, 'Did the same thing happen as in the First World War?' And then she said, 'Yes, but it was a Holocaust of Jews in the Second World War.'"

4. Sample Size Concerns

The illustrations I have given so far largely emphasize ways that qualitative data can be used to enhance survey analysis--and not the other way around--for the strengths of survey research in producing standardized data for a representative sample of respondents are well-known. In my research, I have sought to lower the barriers between qualitative and quantitative methods, by designing a more conversational, open-ended questionnaire than is typical of survey research and by drawing a large sample of depth interview respondents who are more representative of the target population than is typical of qualitative research. Nevertheless, my depth interview sample is not large enough to allow certain research questions to be addressed adequately alone. Thus, although the depth interviews provide an

explanation for the lower knowledge ratings of African-American respondents, which is further corroborated by the interview with the Armenian student, the total number of African-American and Armenian respondents I interviewed in depth is only five. Further explanations can be tested indirectly using the survey data, which includes a more substantial number of African-American students.

For example, it seemed possible that tensions between African-Americans and Jews might produced some lack of interest in the Holocaust among the African-American students. An indirect test of this hypothesis can be done by comparing the proportions of African-American and Jewish *respondents* that the African-American and Jewish *interviewers* succeeded in interviewing. Because potential respondents were randomly assigned to interviewers, these proportions should be identical. While the overall relationship between interviewer and respondent ethnicity is non-significant (Table 1), the subtable for the African-Americans and Jews does show a borderline significant trend toward higher response rates when interviewer and respondent ethnicity is matched. Therefore, the "tension" hypothesis receives a small degree of support.

5. Ethnomethodology and Lay Hypotheses

The fifth, and final, way that I integrated the survey and qualitative interview data was by using the qualitative data as a source of lay hypotheses about the causes and effects of knowledge about the Holocaust. Here, I take an ethnomethodological perspective that draws on people's commonsense understandings of how their social world works, and then take the step of testing these understandings against the available survey data. For example, one of the most frequently expressed beliefs students had about the Holocaust is embodied in the phrase, "never forget"--that is, the belief that knowing about the Holocaust will help prevent future holocausts, while forgetting it could lead to future catastrophe. As one of the students, Kathryn, put it, "I think [the Holocaust]'s just opened my eyes and I don't think I'll *ever*, I could *ever* see that happening and if it ever *were* to start to happen, I think I would definitely take a stand and say, "wait a second, what's going on?"

The depth interviews and survey interviews allow some tests of this lay hypothesis. I looked at the relationship in the survey responses between knowledge about the Holocaust and having an opinion about three related events: German Unification, Iraqi attacks on the Kurds, and Nazi youth activity in Germany. I found, with controls for newspaper reading and other knowledge-related variables, that

knowledge about the Holocaust is significantly associated with knowledge of these related events. The depth interviews provided a second test of this hypothesis, less clouded by questions of temporal causality. At the time of the depth interviews, in March and April 1992, comparisons between the Yugoslavian situation and the Holocaust were already being made although they had not yet appeared widely in the media. When I asked the students whether they had heard of "ethnic strife in Yugoslavia," a little over half said "yes," and as we see in Table 2, this awareness was significantly related to students' earlier knowledge about the Holocaust, just as their hypothesis had predicted. However, optimism about the relation between learning about the Holocaust and actual prevention of similar events must be tempered by the lack, to date, of University of Michigan student activity spurred by the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia--an inactivity that mirrors that of the West as a whole.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I will briefly note how this research fits into the context of survey researchers'

typical use of qualitative data. Often, we might include some qualitative component in our research: for example, in pretesting questionnaires we might use focus group evaluations, or in the final version of a questionnaire we might include some open-ended questions to allow for a qualitative analysis. In my research, I have shown how survey researchers could more fully use qualitative data in a dialogue with survey data: to breathe life into the framework of a regression analysis, to generate explanations for regression outliers, to offer a critique of a survey measure, to balance in-depth information from a few respondents with indirect information from many, and finally, to suggest hypotheses for testing in survey data.

References

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Table 1. Response rates in student survey, by ethnicity of interviewer and respondent.

Respondent Ethnicity	<u>Interviewer Ethnicity</u>			
	African- American	Jewish	Non-Jewish White	Other
African- American	7.8%	3.5%	8.2%	4.4%
Jewish	15.6	28.2	20.4	20.0
Non-Jewish White	51.9	57.6	53.9	57.8
Other	<u>24.7</u>	<u>10.6</u>	<u>17.4</u>	<u>17.8</u>
	100.0	99.9	99.9	100.0
n	(77)	(85)	(304)	(45)

For entire table: $X^2=10.8, df=9, p=.29$.

For African-American and Jewish subtable: $X^2=3.3, df=1, p<.10$.

Table 2. Knowledge about the Holocaust in Fall 1991 as a predictor of awareness of Yugoslavia in Spring 1992, for depth interview students.

Aware of ethnic strife in Yugoslavia	<u>Correct answers to Holocaust knowledge items</u>				
	0	1	2	3	4
No	3	7	2	3	1
Yes	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>
	3	15	4	6	10

Gamma=.57, s.e.=.18, $p<.001$.