

Supplementary Material

School of Dialogue – Program Assumption and Contents

The below description summarizes the main elements of the School of Dialogue program. As the protocol of the intervention constitutes intellectual property of the Forum for Dialogue foundation, it cannot be included in full, however, interested parties are encouraged to reach out to the corresponding author in order to obtain more details.

The School of Dialogue intervention was established in 2008 by the Forum for Dialogue, which is a Polish non-governmental organization dedicated to fostering Polish-Jewish dialogue, reducing antisemitism, and promoting tolerance. Notably, one of the authors of the current article (MB) was involved in designing the first version of the program. However, the program has been revised multiple times since his involvement. In all of its iterations, the program is grounded on social psychological theory and research that suggests active engagement with outgroup's historical presence and material heritage in currently ethnically homogeneous locations constitutes an opportunity to indirectly encounter members of an ethnic outgroup and thus may be beneficial for intergroup attitudes and for the local community (see Contact Hypothesis; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2013). The contents of the program were designed by a group of activists and scholars, using a host of reliable online and offline sources of knowledge on Jewish history and culture (e.g., the repository of the National Library of Poland and the University of Warsaw Library, the Yad Vashem digital collection, the National Digital Archives, Museum of History of Polish Jews resources as well as their Virtual Shtetl project, etc.).

Every year the intervention targets middle school and high school students who reside predominantly in small and medium towns in Poland.¹ These locations used to be populated by a Jewish minority before World War II. The program strives to promote knowledge about the Jewish heritage and culture of pre-war Poland and their influence on Polish culture as well as about current Jewish inhabitants of the country. The main features of the program are an explicit focus on local Polish-Jewish history and the direct engagement with the still existing Jewish material heritage. Every workshop facilitator is provided year-long education and training about this history and how to conduct the workshops.

The School of Dialogue consists of four, day-long workshops that occur at the students' school. There are always two facilitators for each workshop. During each workshop, students learn about the past of their places of residence and, together with specially trained facilitators, discover the still observable Jewish heritage. Between workshops two and three, participating students engage in independent research into local Jewish history in small groups. They interview the oldest inhabitants of their towns/villages, contact local historians, and/or visit archives and museums, among other activities. Sometimes students establish connections with the descendants of the Jewish inhabitants of their towns. All four workshops make use of rich and context-specific visual materials (e.g. photographs—both archival and current).

During Workshop 1, a group of participants is acquainted with the basic topics related to the history and culture of Polish Jews. They learn about the topography of a Polish-Jewish town (e.g., they learn about the role and significance of buildings such as a synagogue, and ritual bath house *mikveh*), using their own place of residence as an example. They also read descriptions of

¹ E.g., between the years 2012-2015, out of 112 different locations 16% were villages, 50% were small towns, 24% were medium towns, and 10% were large cities.

different elements of a Jewish town taken from history books and/or literature, they are also shown pre-war photographs documenting Jewish life (either in their own or other similar towns). They also watch a pre-war movie about life in a small Jewish town in Poland and discuss Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays.

Workshop 2 focuses on local history, with a special emphasis on the history of Jewish people in a given town. It also discusses the meaning of diversity and briefly discusses the history of Jewish people during World War II. Importantly, as the focus of the whole program is on Jewish life and culture in Poland, neither Workshop 2, nor the whole program focus solely on the Holocaust. One of the main tasks of the students during the program is to prepare and conduct a group 'project' (usually a field trip in the footsteps of the local Jewish community). They begin working on the project during the second workshop by planning and dividing the tasks between group members. Between workshop 2 and 3, there are usually 2-3 weeks of a break, during which the students work on their projects.

During Workshop 3, the students rehearse their project and (usually) invite the workshop facilitators to participate in the field trip that they had designed. Sometimes they also present their projects to visitors or local community leaders and media. They also spend some time discussing how the rehearsal of their project went as well as recap some of the knowledge about Jewish holidays and culture that they learned about during Workshop 1. As all projects created in a given year enter a competition, the students are motivated to prepare interesting, engaging, and interactive projects.

During Workshop 4, the students discuss the concept of multiculturalism with a special emphasis on Jewish culture and the diversity among Jews. They discuss different identities that people may have and then learn about diversity of Jewish communities and ways of life. They

also discuss the possibilities of using the field trips that were designed as part of the program in the future. The last element of the workshop asks participants to write letters about their experiences and subjective impressions during the program.

Throughout the program, the students learn that their town/city used to be populated by a significant Jewish minority (which in some places constituted a numerical majority before World War II). By actively engaging with the local heritage, the students are able to discover a new layer of meaning in their well-known, everyday environment. The program concludes with a ceremonial Gala of Dialogue in Warsaw, during which student teams receive awards for their projects.

School of Dialogue evaluation 2015

In 2015, the School of Dialogue program evaluation included a control group. Control group participants were recruited from six schools, randomly selected from the pool of schools participating in the program that year. Control group participants did not themselves take part in the program but filled out the Time 1 and Time 2 questionnaires at approximately the same time as the intervention participants. The study included measures of participants' attitudes towards Jews, inclusion of Jewish people in the self, perspective taking, interest in local history, subjectively evaluated knowledge of history, place attachment, civic engagement intentions, and generalized social trust. Results showed that changes between Time 1 and Time 2 measurement were significant on all measured variables (all $ps < .001$) in the intervention group but not in the control group, with the exception of slightly higher interest in local history ($p < .01$) and place attachment ($p < .05$) at Time 2 (attitudes towards Jews, measured with a feeling thermometer, actually trended towards more negative feelings at Time 2). Thus, the effect of the School of Dialogue intervention cannot be attributed to the passage of time or other unaccounted processes. In light of these findings, a control condition has not been included in subsequent evaluations. For a more detailed description of the 2015 study see Stefaniak (2017; Study 3), which is an unpublished, publicly available Ph.D. dissertation. Data used in that study has been uploaded to OSF: https://osf.io/f64qn/?view_only=205e31c28e0e4139b7cae31a1d3cd081. Unfortunately, a measure collective nostalgia was not included in the 2015 evaluation and thus cannot be used to test the model assessed in the current research.

References

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2013). *When groups meet: The dynamics of intergroup contact*.

Psychology Press.

Stefaniak, A. (2017). *The influence of contact with a multicultural past on intergroup attitudes and civic engagement*. [Ph.D., University of Warsaw].

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