

Where Were The Concentration Camps? The Porous Border Between Geography And Responsibility

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Within the context of war, the constructed nature of borders becomes acutely apparent, and assertions regarding geopolitical space become statements of ideology and collective ownership. Two studies examine how, when speaking about the location of genocidal mass murder, statements of geography influence assessments of collective responsibility. It was found that variations in reference to the geopolitical space in which the violence took place can differently influence how collective responsibility for these crimes is understood. Study 1 found that when Nazi concentration camps were said to have been *in Poland*, participants held Poland more responsible for the camps, and evaluated Poland and Poles more negatively (relative to when Poland was not mentioned). Study 2 found similar results when using visual representations of the location of Nazi German concentration camps and death camps on maps. Participants held Poland more responsible for the camps when Poland appeared on the map, particularly if it appeared on the map as would a sovereign nation. Implications of these findings for education, commemoration, and the cultivation of collective memory around genocide and mass violence are discussed.

The historical location of Nazi German concentration camps in occupied Poland has led to the frequent use of phrases such as “Polish concentration camps,” which blur the line between geography and responsibility. Despite numerous protests by the international community (not only by Poles and Jews; e.g. see the online petition by The Kosciuszko Foundation http://www.thekf.org/kf/our_impact/petition/), such expressions frequently appear in the public sphere, including recent speeches by U.S. President Barack Obama (Landler, 2012) and the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Sobczyk, 2015), and in a new children’s game produced by a major game manufacturer (which included a card with the phrase “Nazi Poland”) (The Guardian, 2015). References to “Polish concentration camps” also remain common in the international media in the face of numerous and frequent objections and despite recent changes to the style guidelines of such news sources as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Associated Press* (e.g. Bota, 2015; Economist, 2011). In 2008 a leading German newspaper, *Die Welt*, ran an article containing the phrase “the former Polish concentration camp Majdanek” (*das ehemalige polnische Konzentrationslager Majdanek*), an expression for which the paper later issued an apology (Welt, 2008). In explaining the error on the part of *Die Welt*, another media source, *Die Presse*, described the camp as “the former

German concentration camp Majdanek in eastern Poland” (*das ehemalige deutsche Konzentrationslager Majdanek in Ostpolen*; Die Presse, 2008). The article in *Die Presse* also contained a map of contemporary Europe on which the location of Majdanek was marked within the contemporary borders of Poland, a common way to portray the location of the concentration camps (for example, see the online educational materials of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org). Many have claimed that the adjective *Polish* refers to geography alone, and not to responsibility (Zychowicz, 2005), and thus, the kind of explanation supplied by *Die Presse* can be understood as in effect attempting to underscore the geographical element of the adjective. Is the kind of explanation found in *Die Presse*, that speaks to geography in this way, really a correction of the kind of error found in *Die Welt*, that directly implied responsibility? Does the added weight placed on geography truly lighten the scale on the side of perceived responsibility? More broadly, when speaking of the location of genocidal mass murder, are statements of geography truly only statements of geography, without implications for perceptions of responsibility?

It is well known that in perceiving the world around us, including geographical location, we make numerous, frequent and even consistent errors (Friedman & Brown, 2000). For this reason, it has been argued that it would be more accurate to say that we make mental *collages* rather than mental *maps* (Tversky, 1993). For example, it has been shown that the hierarchical classification of geographical objects (e.g. cities in states in countries) can influence perceptions of distance and direction (Stevens & Coupe, 1978). Culturally bound classification patterns can also influence how we label even the most seemingly “objective” of geographical phenomena, such as *rivers* (Tayler & Stokes, 2005). Similarly, the way in which we classify and socially engage with objects and people can influence how we perceive the spatial relations between them (e.g. Hirtle & Jonides, 1985; Maddox, Rapp, Brion, & Taylor, 2008). On the basis of such categorization processes, people infer unobserved features of the phenomena in question (Krueger & Clement, 1994; Rehder & Hastie, 2001). For example, the visual representation of human-made, geopolitical entities such as regional or state borders can influence judgments of unrelated phenomena, such as the assessment of risks from natural and environmental disasters. As reported in Mishra and Mishra (2010), by applying state-based categorization schema to the assessment of environmental disasters not governed by these category borders, people were found to make systematic errors in risk assessment; they paid more attention to the distinction between in and out of state, and less attention to geographical distance. Thus, environmental disasters that occurred close by, but in another state, were deemed to be less of a threat, while those that occurred far away, but in the same state, were thought to pose a greater danger.

There continue to be discussions regarding how to speak about the geopolitical space in which the Nazi German concentration camps were built and operated.

While there appears to be a general awareness that adjectives, which can linguistically reference both geography and responsibility (such as *Polish*), can blur the lines between them, it is important to also ask whether the lines between location and responsibility can also be blurred by more explicit reference to geopolitical space alone. Study 1 was designed to explore this issue. More specifically, Study 1 asked if the problem of implied Polish responsibility for the camps is removed by more clearly speaking of Poland as the geopolitical space in which the concentration camps were located.

STUDY 1

The aim of Study 1 was to explore how discussions of geographical location impact perceptions of collective responsibility for mass violence committed on those lands. More specifically, this study was designed to examine if, when discussing the genocidal mass murder that took place in Poland under German occupation, mentioning the occupied land (Poland) in effect links the occupied nation with responsibility for that violence. In this way, this study is a test of the assertion that one can speak of the location of violence in a neutral, evaluation-free manner as some have claimed. Does talking about concentration camps being *in Poland*, actually lead to less negatively charged evaluations of Poland and less attributions of Polish responsibility, than when talking about *Polish* concentration camps or not referring to Poland at all?

Method

Participants

One hundred and forty one participants (53% male, 47% female) residing in the United States of America were recruited through the online platform Amazon Mechanical Turk (on the use of this platform, see Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). The average age was 33.83 ($SD = 11.27$). Information regarding participant ethnicity is provided in the result section below.

Materials and procedure

As part of this online study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Each participant read a brief sentence, which varied slightly between conditions. In the first condition, the sentence read as follows: "*John Demjanjuk has been convicted of aiding the Nazis in the murder of at least 28,000 Jews at the Sobibor Polish concentration camp during World War II.*" This sentence was taken from the website of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Washington, D.C., aimed at educating the public against using the phrases "Polish death camp" and "Polish concentration camp" (in the original text the phrase "death camp" was used rather than "concentration camp"; www.msz.gov.pl). In the second condition, reference to

Poland was changed from an adjective to an explicit geopolitical location: “*John Demjanjuk has been convicted of aiding the Nazis in the murder of at least 28,000 Jews at the Sobibor concentration camp in Poland during World War II.*” In the third condition, all reference to Poland was removed, thus the sentence read as follows: “*John Demjanjuk has been convicted of aiding the Nazis in the murder of at least 28,000 Jews at the Sobibor concentration camp during World War II.*” Participants were told that they would have 25 seconds to study the text, at which point the screen would automatically advance. This was done to help ensure that participants took the time to read the text. Participants were then asked what the sentence was about, so as to assess whether or not they had actually read the text.

Participants were then asked a series of five questions pertaining to Germans, Poles, and Jews. The first question was: “After reading the text, how responsible do you think the following people are for the murders committed at Sobibor concentration camp?” The second question asked how responsible participants believed the average American would find those three ethnic groups. For both questions, a 7-point scale was used, from (1) *not at all responsible*, to (7) *very responsible*. The third question asked how the participants feel at the present moment toward Germans, Poles, and Jews, with the answer options ranging from (1) *very positive*, to (7) *very negative*. The fourth question asked how, with reference to the Second World War, the participants would label Germans, Poles and Jews, with the answer options ranging from (1) *definitely victims*, to (7) *definitely perpetrators*. The fifth question read as follows: “In simplistic language, how would you label the behavior of these ethnic groups in World War II?” The answer options ranged from (1) *definitely good*, to (7) *definitely bad*.

Participants were then asked to rate (again on a 7-point scale), in the light of what happened during the Second World War and the Holocaust, the degree to which Americans should feel the following emotions towards Poland: *empathy*, *anger*, *friendship* and *resentment*.

Finally, demographic information was gathered regarding age, gender, and whether or not participants personally identify as a member of the three ethnic groups mentioned in the study.

Results

One participant did not correctly answer the attention check used to determine if participants had read and understood the target sentence. That participant was removed from subsequent analyses. As a result of random assignment to the three conditions, there were 46 participants in the condition that made *no mention of Poland*, 46 participants in the *Polish concentration camp* condition, and 49 participants in the *concentration camp in Poland* condition. Nineteen of the participants (14%) reported being German American, 9 (6%) reporting being Polish

American, and 6 (4%) reported being Jewish American. Of this group 12% reported identifying with more than one ethnic group. Analyses were rerun after removing German, Jewish and Polish participants, but the general patterns remained the same as those reported below with the entire dataset.

As the three groups (Germans, Jews and Poles) were evaluated along a number of criteria, three One-Way MANOVAs were run to determine if there were significant differences across the three levels of the independent variable for the DVs of each ethnic group. There was no statistically significant difference found in evaluations of Germans across the three levels of the independent variable, $F(2, 139) = 1.08$, $p = .376$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .924$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. There was also no statistically significant difference found in evaluations of Jews across the three levels of the independent variable, $F(2, 139) = .90$, $p = .539$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .936$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. There was however, a statistically significant difference found in evaluations of Poles across the three levels of the independent variable, $F(2, 139) = 1.93$, $p = .014$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .778$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$.

One-Way ANOVAs were then run to evaluate the possible effects of the manipulation on each of the outcome measures. The manipulation had no effect on the degree to which participants rated the responsibility of Germans, $F(2, 138) = .09$, $p = .920$, how they thought other Americans would rate German responsibility, $F(2, 138) = .56$, $p = .574$, how they felt toward Germans, $F(2, 138) = 1.469$, $p = .234$, where they placed Germans on the spectrum between victims and perpetrators, $F(2, 138) = .75$, $p = .475$, and how they evaluated the overall behavior of Germans during the war, $F(2, 138) = .18$, $p = .839$. Germans were seen as perpetrators of the violence in question and within the context of the war, Germans were evaluated negatively.

Similarly, the manipulation had no effect on the degree to which participants rated the responsibility of Jews, $F(2, 138) = .21$, $p = .813$, how they thought other Americans would rate Jewish responsibility, $F(2, 138) = .29$, $p = .749$, how positively they felt toward Jews, $F(2, 138) = .31$, $p = .737$, where they placed Jews on the spectrum between victims and perpetrators, $F(2, 138) = .32$, $p = .729$, and how they evaluated the overall behavior of Jews during the war, $F(2, 138) = 1.00$, $p = .370$. In general, Jews were seen as victims and within the context of the war, Jews were evaluated positively.

The results regarding Poles can be seen in Table 1. There was a significant effect of condition on evaluations of Polish responsibility for the murders committed at the concentration camp, $F(2, 138) = 4.19$, $p = .017$, $\eta^2 = .057$. Post-hoc analysis using the LSD test found a significant difference between the *camp in Poland* condition ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.82$) and both the *Polish camp* condition ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.71$, $p = .035$), and the no mention of Poland condition ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.55$, $p = .007$), with participants holding Poland more responsible when the camp was said to be *in Poland*.

There was also a significant effect of condition on the degree to which participants thought other Americans would hold Poles responsible for the murders, $F(2, 138) = 3.07$, $p = .050$, $\eta^2 = .043$, with more perceived responsibility assigned to Poland in the *camp in Poland* condition ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.86$), relative to the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.64$, $p = .014$).

Regarding how participants felt towards Poles after reading the text, while the evaluations of Poles were on average more negative in the *camp in Poland* condition ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.51$) than in either the *Polish camp* ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.28$) or *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.21$), statistical significance was not reached, but only a statistical trend, $F(2, 138) = 2.48$, $p = .087$, $\eta^2 = .035$.

The manipulation significantly affected where participants placed Poles on the spectrum between victims and perpetrators, $F(2, 138) = 3.63$, $p = .029$, $\eta^2 = .050$. There was a significant difference between the *camp in Poland* condition ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.57$) and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.41$, $p = .05$), and a trend when compared with the *Polish camp* condition ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.54$, $p = .063$). Once again, participants assessed Poles the most negatively when the camps were said to have been *in Poland* compared to the other two conditions.

Across the three conditions there were also significant differences between how participants evaluated the overall behavior of Poles during the war, $F(2, 138) = 3.53$, $p = .032$, $\eta^2 = .049$. Participants were more critical of Poles' behavior in the *camp in Poland* condition ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.22$), actually crossing into the "bad" side of the scale, relative to the *Polish camp* condition ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.50$, $p = .011$), and marginally so with the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.12$, $p = .069$).

While it was decided to present the results of each question separately as each question is uniquely meaningful and high in ecological validity, it would also have been possible to combine all five of the questions above into reliable scales for Poles ($\alpha = .876$), Germans ($\alpha = .804$), and Jews ($\alpha = .759$). While the One-Way MANOVAs examined the various DV's across the three levels, these combined scores can be conceptually understood as a single assessment of group responsibility (see Table 2). On this combined measure there were no significant differences for the evaluations of Germans across the three conditions, $F(2, 138) = .20$, $p = .716$, $\eta^2 = .003$. There were also no significant differences in the evaluations of Jews, $F(2, 138) = .15$, $p = .858$, $\eta^2 = .002$. The pattern for Poles reflects what was reported above, with significant differences across the three conditions, $F(2, 137) = 4.59$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .063$. Post-hoc analysis with the LSD test indicated that there was a significant difference between the condition that mentioned the concentration camp as having been *in Poland* ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.25$), relative to both the condition in which the camp was said to be *Polish* ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.38$, $p = .021$), and when there was *no mention of Poland* at all ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.08$, $p = .005$).

The positive emotions (empathy and friendship) were recoded so that the valence of the four emotions would go in the same direction, with higher scores indicating increasingly negative emotional evaluations. These four items were used to create a single measure of emotional evaluation of Poland ($\alpha = .773$). A significant effect on the emotional evaluation of Poland was also found across the three conditions, $F(2, 138) = 3.08, p = .049, \eta^2 = .043$. LSD post-hoc tests were used to determine which pairs were significantly different from each other. When the manipulation mentioned that the concentration camp was *in Poland* the evaluations of Poland were significantly more negative ($M = 3.66, SD = .98$), relative to both the condition in which the camp was said to be *Polish* ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.17, p = .038$), and when there was *no mention of Poland* at all ($M = 3.20, SD = .98, p = .031$).

Discussion

Study 1 found that presenting a concentration camp as having been *in Poland* negatively impacted how Americans evaluated Poland and Poles on a handful of metrics. Saying that the camp was *in Poland* led to perceptions of greater Polish responsibility for the concentration camp and the murders committed there, increasingly negative attitudes towards Poles, a reduced proclivity to see Poles as victims, increasingly negative assessments of Polish behavior during the war, and increasingly negative emotions toward Poland in general. Interestingly, stating that the camp was *in Poland* also generally led to more negative attitudes towards Poles and Poland, compared to when participants were confronted with the much discussed phrase “Polish concentration camps,” which itself led to more negative evaluations of Poland and Poles than when Poland was not mentioned. Manipulating how the location of the camp was mentioned did not affect how participants evaluated Germans or Jews.

These findings suggest that how we speak about the geopolitical location of mass violence has the potential to influence perceptions of responsibility for that violence. It would seem that in discussing the concentration camps as having been *in Poland*, one is not making a neutral statement, but rather, one that can increase perceptions of Polish responsibility for the camps. Study 2 was designed to further test the assertion that linking mass violence (again, concentration camps) with a geopolitical location is enough to create an evaluative link between the two, thus blurring the difference between geopolitical location and responsibility.

STUDY 2

In order to more fully examine how different presentations of geopolitical space can differently affect perceptions of responsibility for mass violence, Study 2 focused on common representations of such phenomena in the format of maps. Maps commonly accompany educational materials surrounding the Holocaust and World

War II. Such maps can be based on pre-war borders of European countries, post-war borders, the demarcation of occupied lands, or the borders as enacted by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (numerous versions of each are easily found on the Internet and in history books). Thus visual presentation provides an additional test of the possible links between geopolitical space and assessments of collective responsibility.

The texts used in Study 1 made no mention of *German* responsibility for the concentration camps (only *Nazi* responsibility was mentioned). It has been argued that mentioning only *Nazi* responsibility, but not *German* responsibility, leaves the national or ethnic identity of the perpetrators open to interpretation, especially in the eyes of people who are not particularly well educated about the Holocaust and the wider violence of the Second World War (e.g. Overy, 2013). For this reason, in 2008 the Director of the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland asked that “Nazi German” replace “Nazi” on commemorative plaques (Fakty, 2008). Study 2 therefore included reference to German responsibility for the camps, and thus was a stricter test of assumed Polish responsibility for the camps on the basis of Poland’s presentation as the geopolitical space in which the camps operated.

Method

Participants

One hundred and thirty two participants in the U.S. were recruited online via Amazon Mechanical Turk (disqualifying participation by people who had taken part in Study 1). Seventy-nine were men (60%) and 53 (40%) were women. The mean age of the participants was 33.07 ($SD = 9.43$). Seventeen percent (22 participants) identified as German American, 10% (12 participants) as Polish American, and 6% (8 participants) as Jewish American. Of the participants that identified with the three ethnic identities in question, 19% identified with more than one ethnic group.¹

Materials and procedure

In order to further test how the presentation of geopolitical location influences perceptions of responsibility for past violence, Study 2 manipulated the borders and national labels presented on a map showing the locations of concentration camps. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In all three conditions, participants were presented with a color map of Europe showing the location of 5 concentration camps and 6 death camps (Figures 1, 2 and 3). All three of the maps were labeled *German Concentration Camps*, thereby speaking directly to German responsibility for the camps. In one of the conditions, *Poland* was also

¹ As in Study 1, the same pattern of result was seen after removing participants who identified with the three ethnic groups in question. The results presented include the entire sample.

marked on the map, along with Poland's pre-war borders. In the second condition, those borders were removed and in the place of *Poland*, participants saw *Occupied Poland*. In the third condition, there was no mention of Poland at all. As in Study 1, participants were shown the map for 25 seconds, at which point the screen automatically advanced. Participants were then asked two questions to determine if they had in fact looked at the map. Participants were subsequently asked the same battery of questions used in Study 1.

Results

Two participants did not correctly answer the attention checks and were therefore removed from further analyses. As a result of random assignment to the three conditions, 46 participants were presented with the map showing both Germany and Poland, 43 saw the map with Germany and Occupied Poland, and 43 saw the map on which Poland was not mentioned.

As the three groups (Germans, Jews and Poles) were evaluated along a number of criteria, like in Study 1, three One-Way MANOVAs were initially run to determine if there were significant differences across the three levels of the independent variable. There was no statistically significant difference found in evaluations of Germans across the three levels of the independent variable, $F(2, 132) = 1.74$, $p = .073$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .874$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$. There was also no statistically significant difference found in evaluations of Jews across the three levels of the independent variable, $F(2, 132) = .94$, $p = .501$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .929$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. There was however, a statistically significant difference found in evaluations of Poles across the three levels of the independent variable, $F(2, 132) = 3.70$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .719$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$.

One-Way ANOVAs were subsequently conducted to examine if there were differences for each dependent variable across the three levels of the independent variable.

The manipulation had no effect on: the degree to which participants rated the responsibility of Jews for the Holocaust, $F(2, 128) = 1.17$, $p = .315$; how they thought other Americans would rate Jewish responsibility, $F(2, 128) = 2.10$, $p = .127$; how positively they felt toward Jews, $F(2, 128) = 2.33$, $p = .102$; where they placed Jews on the spectrum between victims and perpetrators, $F(2, 128) = 1.77$, $p = .175$; or how they evaluated the overall behavior of Jews during the war, $F(2, 128) = 1.11$, $p = .334$.

The manipulation also had no effect on the degree to which participants rated the responsibility of Germans for the Holocaust, $F(2, 128) = 2.06$, $p = .132$; how they thought other Americans would rate German responsibility, $F(2, 128) = .91$, $p = .402$; where they placed Germans on the spectrum between victims and perpetrators, $F(2,$

128) = .76, $p = .470$; or how positively they felt toward Germans, $F(2, 128) = 2.33$, $p = .102$. There were significant differences between the conditions when it came to how negatively participants evaluated the overall behavior of Germans during the war, $F(2, 128) = 3.80$, $p = .025$, $\eta^2 = .056$. LSD post-hoc analysis indicated that participants were the most critical of Germans in the *Occupied Poland* condition ($M = 6.87$, $SD = .35$), relative to both the *Poland* condition ($M = 6.48$, $SD = .89$, $p = .033$), and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 1.05$, $p = .011$).

The results regarding Poland and Poles can be seen in Table 3. There was a significant effect of the manipulation on evaluations of Polish responsibility for the Holocaust, $F(2, 128) = 7.15$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .100$. Post-hoc analysis using the LSD test found the participants were the most critical of Poland in the *Poland* condition ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.88$) relative to both the *Occupied Poland* condition ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.94$, $p = .004$), and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.54$, $p = .001$). The difference between the *no mention of Poland* condition and the *Occupied Poland* was also significant ($p = .004$), with participants being more critical of Poles in the *Occupied Poland* condition.

There was also a significant effect of condition on the degree to which participants thought other Americans would hold Poles responsible for the Holocaust, $F(2, 128) = 11.38$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .101$. Participants thought other Americans would hold Poland more responsible in the *Poland* condition ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 2.03$), relative to both the *Occupied Poland* ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 2.28$, $p = .013$), and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.59$, $p = .000$). Once again, participants were also more critical of Poland in the *Occupied Poland* condition relative to the *no mention of Poland* condition ($p = .030$).

As in Study 1, the positive emotions (empathy and friendship) were recoded so that the valence of the four emotions would go in the same direction, with higher scores indicating increasingly negative emotional evaluations. These four items were used to create a single measure of emotional evaluation of Poland ($\alpha = .699$). A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in how Poland was evaluated across the three conditions, $F(2, 128) = 3.16$, $p = .046$, $\eta^2 = .047$. Post-hoc analysis with the LSD test indicated that participants expressed more negative emotions to Poland in the condition that showed *Poland* on the map ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.04$), relative to the condition in which there was *no mention of Poland* ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .91$, $p = .019$). The difference between the map with *Poland*, and the map with *Occupied Poland* ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.29$) was marginally significant ($p = .067$).

Regarding how participants felt towards Poles after reading the text, there were statistically significant differences across the conditions, $F(2, 128) = 9.76$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .132$. Participants were more negative towards Poland in the *Poland* condition ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.31$) relative to both the *Occupied Poland* condition ($M = 3.64$, $SD =$

1.39, $p = .002$), and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.36$, $p = .000$).

The manipulation significantly affected where participants placed Poles on the spectrum between victim and perpetrator, $F(2, 128) = 3.05$, $p = .051$, $\eta^2 = .048$. Participants were more negative towards Poles in the *Poland* condition ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.78$) relative to both the *Occupied Poland* condition ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.78$, $p = .039$), and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.39$, $p = .033$).

While participants evaluated the overall behavior of Poles during the most negatively in the *Poland* condition ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.44$), actually crossing the midpoint to the “bad” side of the scale (*Occupied Poland* condition: $M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.79$; *no mention of Poland* condition, $M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.06$), statistical significance was not reached, $F(2, 128) = 1.82$, $p = .427$, $\eta^2 = .013$.

As in Study 1, in order to compare the overall sense of responsibility ascribed to these three groups, the five questions above were combined into scales for Poles ($\alpha = .912$), Germans ($\alpha = .649$) and Jews ($\alpha = .798$). While ANOVAs of such a combined score is statistically similar to the One-Way MANOVAs mentioned above, the combined measure of responsibility is arguably meaningful and may be conceptually clearer. Results are presented in Table 4. There were statistically significant differences between how participants evaluated Poland and Poles across the three conditions, $F(2, 128) = 7.59$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .106$. Participants were the most critical of Poland in the *Poland* condition ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.46$), compared to both the *Occupied Poland* ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.64$, $p = .007$), and the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.13$, $p = .000$).

Interestingly, there was a marginally significant effect of condition on how Germans were evaluated, $F(2, 128) = 2.74$, $p = .068$, $\eta^2 = .041$. Germans were evaluated more negatively in the *Occupied Poland* condition ($M = 6.40$, $SD = .50$) compared with the *no mention of Poland* condition ($M = 6.09$, $SD = .74$, $p = .026$). Also surprising, was the marginally significant effect of condition on how Jews were evaluated, $F(2, 128) = 2.75$, $p = .068$, $\eta^2 = .041$. Jews were evaluated the least sympathetically in the condition in which Poland was presented as if it were a sovereign nation ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.00$), which was statistically different from the *Occupied Poland* condition ($M = 1.75$, $SD = .68$, $p = .029$).

Discussion

Study 2 proves further evidence that how we present the geopolitical location in which mass violence took place has the power to influence how we perceive collective responsibility for that violence. When *Poland* appeared on the map showing the location of what were described as *German concentration camps*, Poland and Poles were more negatively evaluated than when the camps appeared to

be in *Occupied Poland*, or when Poland did not appear on the map at all. The most favorable evaluation of Poland occurred when Poland was not mentioned at all. When Poland was presented as if it were an independent geopolitical entity participants perceived increased Polish responsibility for the concentration camps, they expressed increasingly negative emotional evaluations of both Poland and Poles, they expressed increasingly negative evaluations of Polish behavior during the war, and they expressed decreasingly favorable labels of Poles on the spectrum between perpetrators and victims. Regardless of the map that was shown, participants tended to negatively evaluate Germans within the context of the war, and to positively evaluate Jews. Interestingly, the data seem to suggest that with a larger sample size the manipulation may also have a general effect on how Jews and Germans were evaluated. Similar to Poles, the overall evaluations of Jewish responsibility were the least favorable when Poland appeared on the map as if it were an independent entity. On the other hand, participants were increasingly critical of Germans when Poland appeared on the map, particularly as *Occupied Poland*, and the most favorable when there was no mention of Poland.

It is important to point out that while the manipulation may also impact how Jews and Germans are perceived, regardless of the condition, both groups remained on the two ends of the various scales used. In other words, Germans were perceived as perpetrators and Jews were perceived as victims. While the perceived role of Germans and Jews in the Holocaust appears to be more resistant to such subtle differences in how the Holocaust is presented (although not immune to it), the perceptions of Poles may be more fragile and therefore more susceptible to the effects of such subtle differences. The evaluative shifts regarding Poles were not only larger across the conditions, but as Poles were generally located closer to the midpoint of the scales, such subtle differences between the conditions could affect the overall valence of those evaluations (even shifting them from the positive to the negative side of the spectrum). This lends empirical support for the often shifting and fragile nature of how Poles are perceived within the context of the Holocaust and the Second World War, something about which many Poles and non-Poles are deeply concerned, as the tremendous amount of Polish suffering in that period is often and easily overlooked (Snyder, 2010; Starozynski, 2010). It would therefore seem to be tremendously important to be mindful of the effects that such subtle differences can have on Holocaust and World War II education.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Two studies reported consistent findings that within the context of historical genocidal mass violence, variations in the reference to the geopolitical space in which the violence took place can significantly influence how collective responsibility for these crimes is understood. Study 1 found that when Nazi German concentration camps were said to have been *in Poland*, participants held Poland more responsible for the camps, and evaluated Poland and Poles more negatively

(relative to when Poland was not mentioned, and surprisingly even when the camps were said to be *Polish*). Study 2 found similar results when using visual representations of the location of the concentration camps and death camps on maps. Participants held Poland more responsible for the camps when Poland appeared on the map, particularly if it appeared on the map as would a sovereign nation. While the adjective *Polish* generally produced less favorable evaluations of Poles and Poland than when Poland was not mentioned (in line with the numerous public objections to the historically inaccurate and morally misleading phrase “Polish concentration camps”), highlighting the geographical location had particularly negative effects.

These findings contain numerous implications for the teaching of history, the nurturing of collective memory, and the cultivation of the important lessons of past mass violence. Within the context of war, the constructed nature of borders becomes acutely apparent, and assertions regarding geopolitical space become statements of ideology. For example, the most infamous concentration camp, Auschwitz, was established by Germany in a part of pre-war Poland that was annexed directly into the German Reich; in other words, placing it (along with the neighboring city of Krakow) within Germany on German maps of the time (Snyder, 2010). However, to call these areas German would be in effect to consent to the geopolitical arrangement established by Hitler’s military aggression. Thus to refer to these areas as Polish, or part of Poland, can be understood as an ideological statement regarding the geopolitical arrangement one supports; signs of ideological support for Polish national aspirations and resistance in the face of foreign aggression and a brutal occupation. As the findings of these two studies suggest, such assertions may also, however, implicitly wed Poland to the genocidal system built by Nazi Germany on those same lands.

The complex nature of such classification schema is often hidden under simplified versions of geography that emerge when such history is taught. For example, when identifying the location of concentration camps, contemporary maps are often used, or those with internationally recognized prewar borders. It is more rare for educators to use maps that would have been recognized in those days by Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. While the ideological reasons for this are clear, the findings of these studies would suggest that there may be unintended negative consequences of this decision for Holocaust and World War II education. The tension between, on the one hand, historical accuracy and moral responsibility, and on the other hand, educational expediency, is illustrated by the maps found on the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (www.ushmm.org). As of August 2015, the maps that help explain the history of the Holocaust represented the European geopolitical arrangement as established and maintained by Nazi Germany, including the construction and operation of the concentration and death camps. However, on their pages devoted to providing materials that educators can use, the maps were drastically simplified. The main map illustrating the history of

the Holocaust utilized the pre-war map of Europe, and what is more, it contained the labels of only three countries: Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union. As the Holocaust is extended over time on this video map, Poland is increasingly populated with ghettos and then concentration and death camps. As the findings of these two studies suggest, this can influence how viewers understand collective responsibility for the violence depicted on the map. It would therefore seem to be important to rethink the subtle but powerful messages portrayed by such presentations. With current technology, such as video and interactive online maps that change over the span of time one is studying, portraying a more complex picture of history is easier to do than ever before. As of May 2016, the author could no longer find the more nuanced map on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, as all of the interactive maps used only the simplified, prewar map of Europe.

While these findings are of direct value to Holocaust and World War II education, they are also suggestive of wider patterns in how responsibility is assessed in cases of genocide and mass violence more broadly, as well as other forms of egregious human rights violations. The findings have implications for the teaching of other experiences of occupation and mass violence, such as that experienced under, or as a result of, colonization. When people talk about violence that occurred in parts of (occupied) Africa or (occupied) India or the (occupied) Philippines, how do these discussions impact impressions of those geopolitical entities and identities? In the U.S. we are generally careful to say that in suddenly moving to Canada during the Vietnam War, someone “fled the draft” and not that they “fled the United States,” and yet we readily say that someone “fled Poland” during the Second World War and not that they fled the “brutal Nazi German occupation.” Similarly, people around the world fleeing war, poverty or oppression are generally said to be fleeing their respective countries, and not those more complex phenomena that are the actual reasons for their flight. When discussing increasing international mobility and the rights of refugees, it is important to understand how the presentation of geopolitical phenomena can influence our understanding of mass violence and other reasons for mass migrations.

While the ecological validity of the materials used is high, this also makes it difficult to control for various other important factors, such as levels of knowledge regarding the Holocaust and World War II, strength and type of personal identity, variations in personal experience such as travel, and strength of preconceived war-related stereotypes. However, arguably the most immediately relevant factor, participants’ membership in the three groups in question (Germans, Jews, Poles), was taken into consideration, and as reported above, was not found to affect the results of either study. While factors such as knowledge and travel experiences are likely to influence how people process such information, it is not immediately clear what kind of effect, if any, they would have on the result reported here. People may know that Nazi Germany, and not Poland or Poles, were responsible for the camps, though they may accept the assertion that the lands on which the camps were run were

“Polish” or “in Poland,” as an expression not of Polish responsibility, but of the illegitimacy of the German occupation. Thus, it is not immediately clear what kinds of effects varying degrees of knowledge would have on participants’ receptivity and processing of the various manipulations. Future research may help to shed light on the possible effects of such additional factors in various contexts.

Similarly, these two studies are not able to speak to the exact cognitive mechanisms underlying the effects of the manipulation. For example, they do not address the mechanisms by which the information provided or omitted is deemed relevant in making judgments of responsibility. In other words, the observed effects could arise not only out for reasons of priming or accessibility, but also due to perceived relative fit, such as that involving preexisting stereotypes or perceived inter-category links, like potentially those between judgments regarding collective violence and judgments regarding other group-based categories such as national borders (Blanz, 1999; Maddox, Rapp, Brion & Taylor, 2008).

One possible explanation for these effects may be found in the entitativity and essentialism literature. It has been reported that when describing individuals and groups the use of nouns (versus adjectives) can facilitate greater stereotypical and essentialist inferences (Carnaghi et al., 2008) and more pronounced intergroup biases (Graf, Bilewicz, Finell, & Geschke 2013). This may help explain the surprising result from Study 1, in which more responsibility was ascribed to Poles when the phrase “concentration camps *in Poland*” was used, relative to when the phrase “*Polish* concentration camps” was used (although the adjective *Polish* lead to more perceived Polish responsibility relative to the condition in which Poland was not mentioned). Similarly, there is evidence that maps vary in the degree to which they present geopolitical entities as being singular, unified entities; that is, with greater or lesser degrees of entitativity. This entitativity can act as a moderator, either strengthening or weakening the (positive or negative) image of the geopolitical entity presented on the map. For example, maps that lead to higher levels of perceived entitativity have been found to strengthen the image (be it ally or enemy) held by American participants of the European Union, while lower levels of perceived entitativity weakened that image (Castano, Sacchi, & Gries, 2003). Thus, it is possible that in both Study 1 and Study 2, the perceived entitativity of Poland was increased, by the use of the noun *Poland* (in Study 1) and by the use of clear international borders (in Study 2). Future research should pay particular attention to the possible role of perceived entitativity in the link between geopolitical unites and perceptions of responsibility.

It is a strength of the current study that similar effects were found across two media: written texts and maps. Hopefully future research will help to shed more light on the mechanisms underlying the differing effects reported here within the contexts of these two media. The link between presentations of geopolitical space and ascriptions of responsibility for mass violence is interesting within the

framework of basic research on social cognition. It is also important within the wider scope of human rights advocacy, as quality education and honest, accurate, and respectful commemoration around the issues of genocide and mass violence are of such great importance. History can be complex. It is therefore important that in simplifying shifting geopolitical space for educational purposes we not distort perceptions of responsibility. In teaching history, so that future generations may learn from the past, we should pay careful attention so as to not inadvertently present victims as perpetrators. It is important that we pay attention to the porous border between perceptions of geography and perceptions of responsibility.

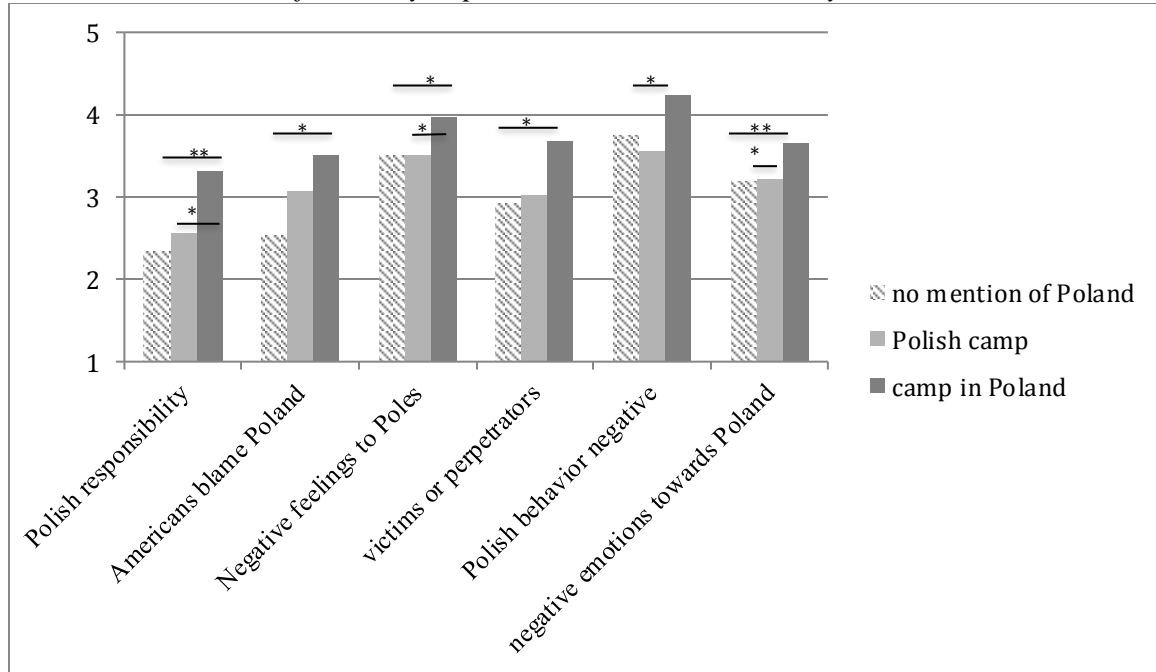
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APPENDICES

Table 1: *Evaluations of Poles by experimental condition in Study 1*



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2: Evaluations of responsibility of the three ethnic groups by condition Study 1

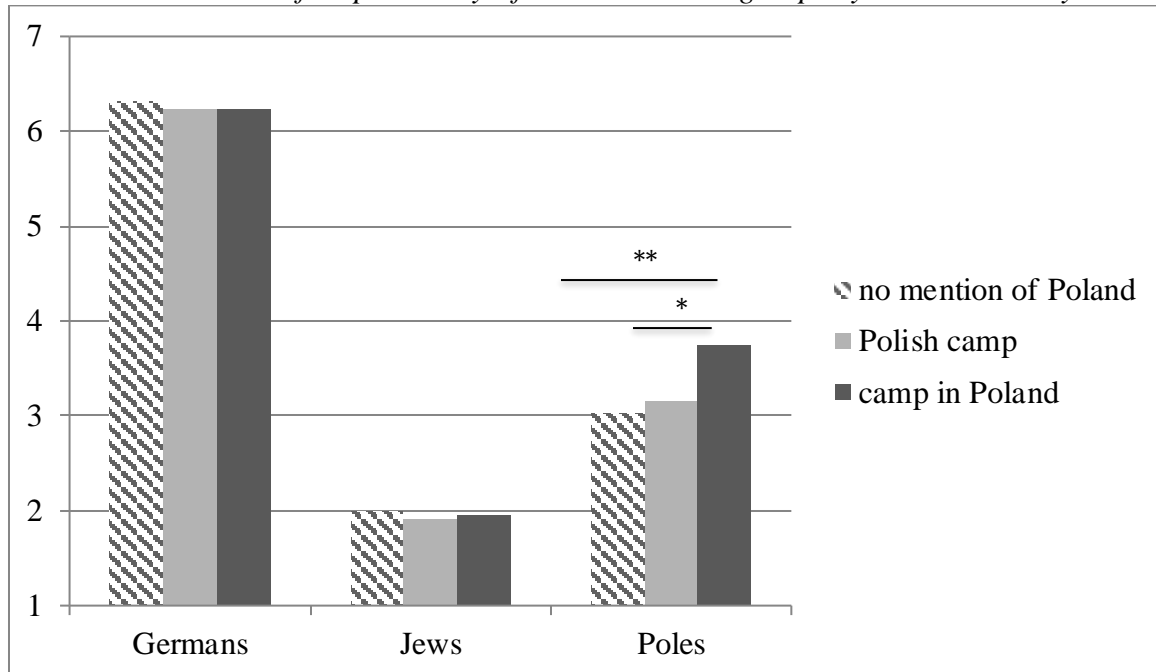


Figure 1: Map presenting Poland's pre-war borders

German Concentration Camps



Figure 2: Map presenting Occupied Poland

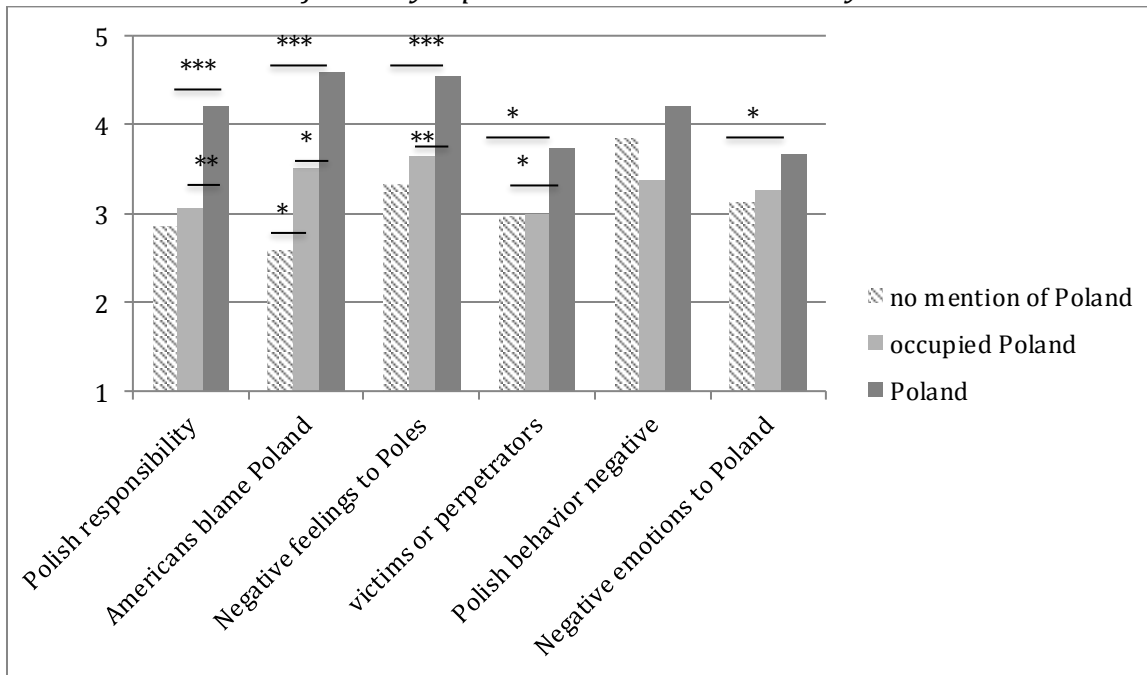
German Concentration Camps



Figure 3: Map with no reference to Poland

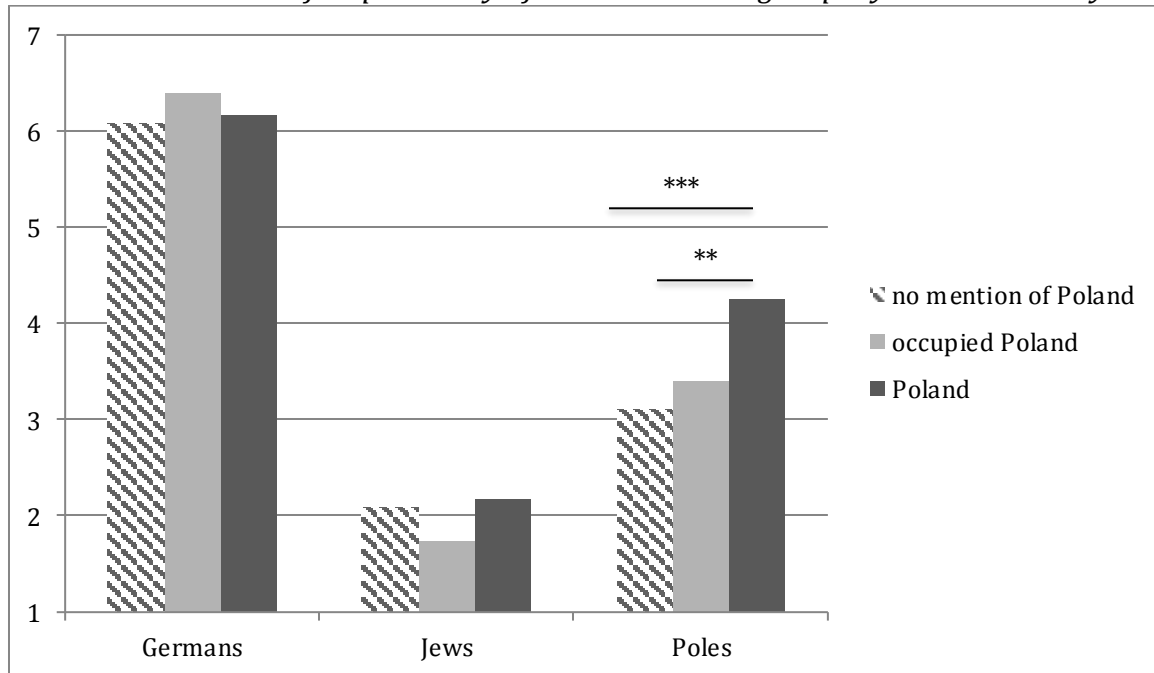


Table 3: Evaluations of Poles by experimental condition in Study 2



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4: Evaluations of responsibility of the three ethnic groups by condition Study 2



Note: ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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