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Teaching historical empathy

Perspective taking in past and present using eyewitnesses

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CHAPTER 1

General introduction

Chapter 1: General introduction

1.1 Aim of the thesis

One Monday afternoon in January, when we were discussing the involvement of the Netherlands in slavery in my 11th grade history class, I used the word "enslaved" to refer to the Africans brought to the Americas by the Dutch during the Atlantic slave trade to work at the plantations. One of my students exclaimed in surprise: "Are you using the word 'enslaved', madam? What is wrong with the word 'slaves'?" After which another student exclaimed: "And now they also want us to apologize for the Dutch slavery past. We're not racists, are we?" As a white woman, born in the Netherlands, with a black husband and children of mixed backgrounds, I was very aware of my own positionality. How could I help my students to take different perspectives of people in the past and present? How could I foster empathy in my history class? How could I do justice to my students' questions at that moment, pay attention to this sensitive history and, at the same time, do right by my own emotions and those of my students, without accusing anyone or polarizing the conversation about this sensitive history? I knew that I was not alone in this experience. Research has shown that discussing sensitive historical issues is not an easy task for history teachers (Goldberg & Savenije, 2018; Hess, 2004; Savenije, 2014; Sheppard, 2010). At the same time, taking a perspective, different from your own also requires a lot from students, especially with sensitive topics. New information that contradicts one's existing perspective can lead to cognitive dissonance, causing feelings of discomfort and a sense of being threatened (Frimer et al., 2017).

In today's society, with its social media, globalization and mass migration, students are often confronted in their daily lives with multiple perspectives. Through TikTok, for example, students can follow people in all parts of the world, including those with sometimes radical ideas. Globalization and mass migration can also confront students in their own environment with perspectives and values that clash with their own. Sometimes those can be very far apart, which can lead to polarization. In both the US and Europe, there has been a rise in right-wing extremism and polarization in recent years (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019; Parker, 2005) and,

as a history teacher in the Netherlands, I have noticed that the polarization in society also regularly translates into the classroom, especially during the discussion of sensitive issues.

At the same time, citizenship competencies as ‘dealing with diverse perspectives’ or ‘empathy’, are being given prominence in education and are being reflected in the curricula of different countries (e.g., *Burgerschap.slo.nl*, 2023; Common Core State Standards, 2010; Council of Europe, 2011; Gelinck et al., 2021; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007; *udir.no* Core curriculum, 2022; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003; Veugelers, 2007). The context of this thesis is history education at a secondary level in the Netherlands, where citizenship education is very much in a state of evolution. Although schools have been tasked with mapping their citizenship education, and curriculum developers are in the process of specifying the goals of citizenship, in the Dutch context, citizenship goals are not clearly assigned specifically to the school subjects, making it unclear which teachers are working on which goal, and in which subjects. In addition, it often remains unclear to teachers what citizenship competencies are involved in the curriculum of their subject, and if and how they can then teach, for example, competencies such as ‘dealing with diverse perspectives’ and ‘empathy’ in the classroom.

History education, and more specifically historical empathy, where students explore perspectives of people from the past, has the potential to provide starting points for practicing how to take on perspectives other than your own. Historical empathy has long been part of history education, and is taught with subject-specific goals in mind, such as better understanding the actions of people from the past and enlivening the past (Barton & Levstik, 2004; De Leur et al., 2020; Endacott & Brooks, 2013, 2018; Seixas, 2012). Through practicing historical empathy with historical figures, students can develop an understanding of the experiences, decisions, and actions of individuals in the past. This practice resembles the process of understanding present-day experiences, decisions, and actions, potentially aiding students in empathizing with various perspectives within their own society. Studies have shown that working with eyewitnesses in history class is a powerful technique for promoting historical empathy (Bertram et al., 2017; Hülsken, 2018; Hülsken et al., 2022; Huijgen & Holthuis, 2016; Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2017), as they provide starting points to work on taking perspective of people in the past and present, thus combining historical empathy and empathy. Several researchers have highlighted the significance of historical empathy in fostering empathy, inclusivity, compassion, students' appreciation of diversity, mutual comprehension, and open-mindedness in contemporary contexts (Barton & Levstik; 2004;

Colby, 2008; Davison, 2017; Dulburg, 2002; Endacott & Brooks, 2018). With historical empathy, students can practice taking the perspective of someone in another time, in a different place and culture (e.g., Brooks 2008, 2011; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Barton and Levstik (2004) proposed that history could teach students how to live responsibly with others and could contribute to their preparation to participate in democracy. Although there are opportunities to contribute to empathy as a citizenship goal by enhancing historical empathy in history class (Davison, 2017; Dulberg, 2002; Karn, 2023, 2024; Wilke et al., 2022), this has not yet been researched. The question then is how historical empathy (taking the perspectives of people in the past) and empathy (taking perspectives of people in the present) can be brought together in history class.

At the same time, several studies have shown that teaching historical empathy is difficult (e.g., Ashby & Lee, 1987; Cunningham, 2009; Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Miles & Gibson, 2022; Seixas & Morton, 2013). There is a need for more knowledge about suitable pedagogic approaches for the classroom and for professional development of teachers. Therefore, the central question I address in this dissertation is:

How can history teachers foster empathy in history lessons using eyewitnesses?

1.1.2 Positionality and motivation of the researcher

Since research embodies a collaborative environment influenced by both the researcher and the participants and the identities of both the researcher and the participants can significantly influence the research process (England, 1994), self-conscious awareness as researcher is very important. Positionality theory recognizes that individuals possess numerous intersecting identities and that, in essence, individuals derive significance from the various facets of their identity (Kezar, 2002). For me as a researcher, different identities may have influenced my research: my identity as a history teacher, my identity as a mother of a multicultural family, and my work as a coach of teachers and parents in the Virtues project (Virtuesproject.com).

To start with my identity as a history teacher. I am very aware that my 25 years of experience as teacher of history and civics at various secondary schools have influenced my perspective on my research. First, because I believe that education can make a difference, and that historical empathy of students can be promoted through students' practice and teachers' modeling. Second, because I have combined my teaching with my research, funded by a

Doctoral Grant for Teachers from the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research NWO, which allowed me to combine my job as a history teacher with my PhD research. Both before and during my PhD research, I taught history and civics, a personal and professional background that made me an 'insider' with respect to my research subject. In my classes, for example, I have tried to work regularly with personal stories and eyewitnesses, and often receive feedback from students that they remembered that from their history lessons, and that it changed their perspectives on a specific matter. One of my 12th grade students once said: "Ma'am, I was so happy with that assignment about different perspectives on Black Pete and your own personal story and that of your husband. As a result, I finally understood why black people in the Netherlands sometimes feel discriminated when we call them Black Pete." Comments like this from students have strengthened my conviction that students can really grow in understanding and tolerating a different perspective than their own, particularly through personal connections and personal stories, and that a method of teaching can promote this. This was, and is, a personal and professional motivation for me to conduct this research.

Second, my identity as a mother in a multicultural family may have motivated me to conduct this research. Dealing with multiple cultural and religious perspectives is part of my daily life and of the raising of our three children, and has also motivated me to engage in this research. In addition, my work as a coach in the Virtues project (Virtuesproject.com), a worldwide endeavor built on research into the profound teachings of the world's major wisdom traditions, which focuses on encouraging the application of virtues in daily life, has also influenced my perspective as a researcher. Since 1991, the Project has been introduced in more than 135 countries by trained facilitators and coaches, helping educators to integrate virtues into teaching. In my work as a coach, I work with teachers and parents on how to observe and then name virtues in the behavior of their students and children. The premise is that by seeing and naming virtues, such as 'empathy' or 'caring', linked to concrete behaviors displayed by students, the students can develop those virtues. From my perspective, citizenship goals as 'dealing with diverse perspectives' and 'empathy' are competencies that students can learn and get better at through frequent practice, particularly if those competencies or virtues are explicitly named by the teacher during practice. In summary, therefore, my own perceptions as a history teacher, mother in multicultural family and coach in the Virtues Project have motivated me to undertake this research.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Since I wanted to gain more insight into the what, why and how of teaching historical empathy, this theoretical framework discusses the status of history education research on the definition, goals and ways of teaching historical empathy.

1.2.1 Defining historical empathy

The concept of historical empathy is intricate and multifaceted. Over the course of more than thirty years of research, numerous conceptualizations have emerged, all contributing to complexity. Here I discuss how historical empathy is defined in this research, how the cognitive and affective approaches of historical empathy can play a role, and how historical empathy and empathy can be related.

First, historical empathy has been described in different ways, such as a mode of inquiry (Coltham & Fines, 1971), “an achievement, a process, a disposition” (Lee, 1983, p. 35), ability (Department of Education and Science, 1985), skill (Portal, 1987; Thompson, 1983) and heuristic (Portal, 1987) and process (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Such conceptual differences lead to different emphases in terms of classroom strategies to promote historical empathy, and can also lead to the question whether it can be encouraged or developed.

Second, educational research includes different perspectives on the cognitive and affective elements and approaches of historical empathy. As with the cognitive approach, researchers emphasized cognitive elements, often preferring the term ‘historical perspective taking’, described as comprehending the behaviors of historical figures through an examination of their perspectives (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Huijgen et al., 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013). That approach emphasized that, as sufficient historical distance is needed to contextualize the actions of historical actors, it is crucial for students to possess an understanding of historical events (context) and to grasp the causal relationships between events. Since the early 2000s, a new trend has emerged among scholars, conceptualizing historical empathy as a cognitive-emotional process. Researchers such as Noddings (2002), Barton and Levstik (2004), Endacott and Brooks (2013, 2018) and Karn (2023) added affective aspects to the cognitive approach, paying attention to moral education or theories of care, and dismissing historical empathy as being primarily intellectual and cognitive in nature (Verducci, 2000). Their affective dimension can encompass demonstrating interest in

historical actors, caring for them, sympathizing or identifying with them, recognizing their human emotions, and feeling emotionally engaged with their experiences (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Unlike previous scholars who emphasized the importance of distancing the historical investigator from historical figures, Barton and Levstik involve the student as a central figure in the process. By reconceptualizing historical empathy as a cognitive-affective process, their approach not only values the ability to think historically but also the development of responsible, caring citizens in the current society, stressing the importance of a personal connection as a condition for historical empathy. When a student feels emotionally invested in an assignment or a particular topic, a personal connection can develop, either because the task aligns with the student's interests or because it mirrors a real-world scenario (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). As Endacott and Brooks (2013) pointed out, historical figures did not always apply logic or reason when making decisions, and the affective elements of historical empathy allow students to imagine the emotions and feelings that motivated people to act in particular ways.

The attention to the affective side of historical empathy is in line with the development of the 'affective turn' in education in the mid-1990s (e.g., Clough & Halley, 2007; Miller, 2010; Zembylas et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2021), which has sought to deepen understanding of how teachers and students are emotionally impacted, what motivates or upsets them, and how feelings and memories influence the process of teaching and learning. Zembylas (2021), for example, has contended that during classroom conversations about racism, social justice, and critical pedagogy, there is a need for explicit pedagogical focus on students' emotional reactions. In educational research, focus on affective learning outcomes such as attitudes, motivation, and values (Buissink-Smith et al., 2011; Smith & Ragan, 1999) has also increased. The role of the teacher is considered crucial, as when teachers may unconsciously and consciously transfer their own thinking and values to their students. That affective elements can hinder students from providing an adequate historical interpretation can also be challenging. For example, a student who becomes very emotionally involved with a historical actor may be less able to objectively determine the reliability of the historical source in question, while a student who despises particular values of that historical actor may find it more difficult to still see its historical reliability. These challenges to teaching historical empathy will be discussed further in chapter 1.2.3.

The concept of historical empathy is also addressed within the field of philosophy of history, which discusses similar challenges with regard historical empathy, proposing that historical empathy is needed to achieve better knowledge or understanding of the past (e.g., Collingwood, 1999; Gadamer, 2004; Kohut, 2020; Retz, 2015, 2018). The significance of historical empathy in comprehending the human past, often characterized as a challenging and expansive concept, can be traced back to the 18th-century historian and philosopher Vico (Kohut, 2020). Historians can feel uneasy about historical empathy due to its ambiguity and its association with emotions and imagination, which can seem at odds with the logic and evidence-based approach typical of social sciences (Kohut, 2020). Collingwood (1999), for instance, highlighted the dialectical nature of his 'doctrine of re-enactment,' where historical empathy serves to uncover the underlying assumptions and thought processes of past agents. In history education, historical empathy has involved students endeavoring to understand the specific circumstances of historical actors, and is regarded as an intellectually challenging task (Retz, 2015, 2018). Retz has suggested that history classrooms face a challenge in comprehending historical figures within their own contexts, primarily due to the conflict arising from the necessity to detach from our current positionality, which ironically serves as the foundation for grasping the past. He proposes that Gadamer's hermeneutics (2004), with its favorable view of prejudice, tradition, and temporal separation, can turn what are often considered barriers to empathy into potential facilitators of it.

With regard to the definition of historical empathy, I align with the definition of Endacott and Brooks, who consider historical empathy to be both a cognitive and affective process that students engage in in history lessons, considering it something students can achieve. I too consider historical empathy to be something that students can achieve, and also see it as a competency that students can develop by practicing in history class.

Historical empathy and empathy

Despite the prominence of the empathy construct in developmental research (Sagi & Hoffman, 1976; Ungerer et al., 1990; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1983), there is no consensus on its definition. As Wispe (1986) notes, the term originated from Titchener's (1909) translation of the German word *Einfühlung*, translated in Dutch as 'inlevingsvermogen', which conveyed the idea of 'feeling into'. Literature on empathy distinguished between 'empathic concern', which refers to feeling sympathy for others' misfortunes, and 'perspective taking', which

involves imagining others' viewpoints (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Batson, 2011; Davis et al., 2001; Decety & Jackson, 2004; Konrath et al., 2011). Developing empathy is crucial for social and emotional growth, influencing individuals' interactions with others and the quality of their relationships (Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Rodriguez, 2022). Empathy is influenced by interpersonal and contextual factors and comprises both an affective component, involving subjective experiences of others' emotions, and a cognitive component, encompassing the ability to understand others' motivations (Bernhardt & Singer, 2012; Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Decety, 2011). The cognitive component of empathy relies strongly on attributing emotional states to others and may partially appeal to mechanisms underlying *Theory of mind* (Decety, 2011), a term from psychology that describes the concept and understanding a person has of other people's perceptions and perspectives. A person with a theory of mind realizes that their own views, desires, experiences and emotions may differ from those of another.

Endacott and Brooks (2013, 2018) have connected historical empathy with the widely acknowledged psychological framework of empathy, which also involves the cognitive and affective dimensions, by drawing on the insights and research of prominent empirical psychology scholars such as Decety (2015), Eisenberg & Morris, (2001), and Hoffman (1985). A key difference is that historical empathy adds a temporal dimension. Endacott and Brooks note that historical empathy will always remain different from contemporary empathy because it involves individuals from the past who are likely to have employed different modes of thinking that are shaped by the political, social, and cultural context of a distinct time and place (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Attempting to comprehend individuals from the past presents a paradox: while it is assumed that humans, both then and now, experience a spectrum of similar emotions and thoughts, certain aspects of the past, such as desires, beliefs, and perspectives, could diverge radically from contemporary norms (Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Endacott, 2014; VanSledright, 2004; Wineburg, 2001). This combination of similarity and distinction poses a distinct challenge, as does the fact that students cannot meet historical figures, so cannot talk to those individuals or see their nonverbal responses. With people in the present, such interaction is possible when it concerns people in your own environment.

With regard to the definition of 'empathy' in this thesis, I have used the concepts of 'empathy', and 'take different perspectives in the present' and 'be able to take perspective' to indicate the particular citizenship competencies that teachers tried to promote through

historical empathy. However, these concepts developed during the course of my research. Where I started with the term 'general empathy' (empathy in everyday life) during my first study, to distinguish it from historical empathy, later on I more often used the terms 'historical empathy' or 'being able to take the perspective of people in the past', and 'empathy' or 'being able to take the perspective of other people in the present'. This has partly to do with the translation from Dutch to English. In Dutch, I used the words 'historisch inlevingsvermogen' and 'inlevingsvermogen' and, in Dutch, 'inlevingsvermogen', does not have the same meaning as 'empathie', while in English 'inlevingsvermogen' and 'empathie' are both translated as 'empathy'. When I used the word 'empathy' in English, I refer to 'inlevingsvermogen' in Dutch, which I consider to have both cognitive and affective aspects.

Because I depart from the idea that students can become better at empathizing, an important question is how we could determine such progress. Although several scientific traditions discuss historical empathy and empathy, measuring whether students are developing in their ability to empathize is complicated, especially if it concerns only a short lesson unit and affective components are involved (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, 2018; Gehlbach, 2011; Hartmann & Hasselhorn, 2008; Huijgen et al., 2014; Perikleous, 2019; Rantala et al., 2016). Research on measuring historical empathy has often focused on students' ability to explain people's behaviour in the past (Ashby and Lee, 1987; Huijgen et al., 2014; Perikleous, 2019). For example, Hartmann and Hasselhorn (2008) and Huijgen et al. (2014) developed instruments to measure students' ability in historical perspective taking. However, Rantala et al. (2016) measured students' attitudes regarding historical empathy in a survey before and after an exercise in historical empathy. Other research has shown that students' self-efficacy, understanding and valuing of a skill are important factors in their development of a skill (Kiuru et al., 2020; Velayutham & Aldridge, 2013). Measurements could therefore also focus on these aspects.

1.2.2 Objectives of historical empathy

Empathy and historical empathy have similarities that may influence the goals of teaching historical empathy. These goals can be broadly categorized into, first, the more subject-specific goals and, second, the citizenship goals (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott & Brooks, 2013, 2018; Karn, 2023, 2024; Seixas, 2012). With regard to the first category, there

are numerous claims that historical empathy contributes to historical understanding (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott & Brooks, 2013, 2018; Seixas, 2012), and that it can help students learn to establish connections between the past and present (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott & Brooks, 2013, 2018). Another of its subject-specific objectives is that it can bring the past to life through historical imagination (De Leur et al., 2020; Lévesque, 2008). It can also promote multiperspectivity, which proposes that history is subjective and open to interpretation, with numerous coexisting narratives about specific historical events, rather than being objectively represented by a single closed narrative (Colby, 2008). For example, while looking at the same historical event, empathizing with a perspective of a person and then doing that for different people living in the same time leads to multiple perspectives. One form of multiperspectivity is that a specific historical event can be viewed from different actors. For instance, an enslaved person will have experienced the abolition of slavery very differently than the owner of a plantation in that same time. In that case, fostering historical empathy is believed to contribute to citizenship goals in the same way as taking different perspectives of people in the present (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). There is, however, still little empirical evidence for this.

With regard to the second category, the citizenship goals, Barton and Levstik (2004) have mentioned that teaching historical and general empathy are relevant in the context of citizenship. There are examples where history teachers teach historical empathy combining domain specific and citizenship goals (e.g., Davison, 2017; Verducci, 2000). Davison (2017) used historical empathy to teach students to first, affectively tune into shared human traits and second, to cognitively understand why another person has other beliefs and values. In doing so, Davison aimed to develop students' empathy and understanding of the lives of other people in past and present, showing that teachers can alternate the cognitive and affective approaches to historical empathy within their lessons and, in addition, work on subject-specific and citizenship goals at the same time. The vision document of the Dutch Association for History Teachers mentions that "The past is 'foreign' to students: people do things differently there..... Empathy and being able to be critical with information are important skills in the 21st century" (van der Kooij & van der Schans, 2018, p. 15).

In a globalized world, empathy has also been identified as an important competency and thus as an important skill to be fostered (Barton & Gravis, 2019; Dolby, 2014; Risberg, 2023; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007). Empathy, also referred to as social perspective taking is

increasingly seen as an important goal in global citizenship education (Council of Europe (p. 24), 2018; Risberg, 2023; UNESCO Global Citizenship Education; 2015). Risberg (2023) argues that empathy should be seen in this regard as both affective and cognitive. Some academics argue that historical perspective taking and social perspective taking (SPT), such as understanding the viewpoints of classmates and members of society, are closely related (Gehlbach, 2011; Hartmann & Hasselhorn, 2008; Nilsen, 2016).

Historical empathy can thus be taught with both subject-specific and citizenship goals, which may have particular influence on how teachers design their lessons. To date, the literature on historical empathy has mostly focused on discussing what historical empathy is and how it relates to citizenship goals, and little is known about how teachers and students consider it. We do not know how teachers and students define historical empathy or what they think its goals are and, thus, why it is important to teach it. It is also not clear how the pursuit of goals can complement or reinforce each other, or perhaps also come into conflict. In teaching practice, these subject-specific and citizenship goals are not two separate objects in pedagogy, but are often integrated, so it can be challenging as a teacher to be engaged in teaching historical and citizenship skills when, for example, a student is simultaneously combining critical examination of historical sources with making a personal connection with an eyewitness. If a teacher primarily wants the historical reliability of an eyewitness from the past to be considered, a different pedagogy may be needed than when discussing the moral decisions of this eyewitness, whose decisions might be morally reprehensible in contemporary society. There may, for example, be questions among teachers who are afraid of anachronism, presentism and moral judgment. It is possible that teachers may fear that if they pursue more citizenship goals, students will distinguish past and present less, which could lead to anachronism or presentism when, for example, students define past historical events through the lens of their own era, values, and mores (Cunningham, 2009).

In this dissertation, I work from the idea that teaching historical empathy not only aims at the development of the historical skill to take the perspective of a person from another time, but also provides starting points for practicing the citizenship competency ‘taking the perspective of other people in the present’ (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

1.2.3 Teaching historical empathy

Fostering historical empathy presents teachers with a number of challenges. First, to teach a historical skill such as historical empathy well, a teacher needs a good understanding of what the skill exactly entails and why it is important to teach it (e.g., Stoel et al., 2017; van Drie, et al., 2017). Second, it might be difficult for teachers to formulate clear learning goals for teaching historical empathy, because different underlying goals are possible. A third challenge is that historical empathy involves different sub-skills, such as ‘contextualizing’ and ‘being aware of your own positionality’ (Brooks, 2011; Coltham & Fines, 1971; Cunningham, 2009; Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Huijgen et al., 2017; Lévesque, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2013). A fourth challenge is providing explicit instruction on how to empathize with people from the past. It is difficult for teachers to provide explicit instruction on historical skills and that is probably why it rarely happens (Gestdóttir et al., 2019; Nokes & De La Paz, 2023), while research has shown positive effects of providing explicit instruction and guided practice (i.e., the what, how [which steps], and why [importance]) when teaching complex skills (e.g., Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2018; Veenman, 1998).

In the context of teaching historical empathy, as a teacher I have experienced that there can be resistance among students to take a perspective different from their own, in the past and in the present. Thinking "us versus them" or being "for or against" in a situation gives people clarity in a complex situation. This is particularly relevant in a digital society where a lot of information is available, where thinking in terms of "us versus them" is a clear way to clarify all the available information and perspectives. If one experiences one's own privileges and perspective as self-evident or even as universal, one is likely to make less effort to empathize with other perspectives (Blakemore & Agllias, 2020; Dolby, 2014; Konrath et al., 2011; Krznaric, 2014). This could lead to more polarization and less understanding for people with perspectives different from your own. On the other hand, really knowing, meeting or talking to someone with a truly different perspective in person already makes it a little easier to think less in terms of "us" and "them" (Allport, 1954). Finally, distance in space, time, and experience can complicate historical empathy, while a personal connection and personal stories could help students to empathize with a perspective other than their own (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, 2018).

Various activities and teaching strategies are mentioned in the literature that are suitable for promoting historical empathy, such as, for example, working with primary sources, class discussions, role play, film, literature, texts and images in the textbooks, teacher's stories and visiting historic sites or museums (e.g., Bertram et al., 2017; Collette, 2019; Cunningham, 2009; Foster, 1999; Gehlbach, 2011; Goldberg & Savenije, 2018; Nilsen, 2016; Savenije & De Bruijn, 2017). Teachers, however, report that there are insufficient resources for teaching it in secondary schools (e.g., Yilmaz & Koca, 2012).

Research has also shown that utilizing eyewitness accounts in history lessons are effective for fostering historical empathy (Bertram et al., 2017; Hülksen, 2018; Hülksen et al., 2022; Huijgen & Holthuis, 2016; Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2017), as they have the potential to heighten engagement and enthusiasm in history lessons, sometimes resulting in a deeper understanding of the past (Bertram et al., 2017; Lanman, 1987). According to Huijgen and Holthuis (2016) interaction with eyewitnesses could facilitate empathy "because oral history renders the past tangible and visible in a way" (Huijgen & Holthuis, 2016, p. 6). In their study, the teachers interviewed mentioned that oral history can promote students' ability to empathize.

Especially eyewitnesses in a documentary or as a guest speaker may provide good starting points for addressing both cognitive and affective dimension of historical empathy (Huijgen & Holthuis, 2016; Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2017; Savenije & De Bruijn, 2017) and promoting taking the perspective of people in the past and present. Little is known, however, which design principles are useful to teach empathy using eyewitnesses in the history classroom.

In order to evaluate whether developed design principles and concretely developed materials and lessons work, it is not only necessary to examine the experiences and outcomes with students, but also whether teachers can use them in their own teaching. This requires professionalization. Little research has yet been done on professionalizing teachers in teaching students to take perspectives in past and present using eyewitnesses. Teacher professionalization involves activities that aim to increasing knowledge and skills and changing attitudes and beliefs, and that will improve the service they provide to their students (Hoekstra et al, 2009; Hoyle & John, 1995; Huijboom et al, 2020; Van Veen et al., 2010). In the Netherlands, teachers' professional development is perceived as a professional duty, but not as a mandatory one (De Vries et al., 2013).

To sum up, the educational literature shows that historical empathy is a complex skill that requires other sub-skills. With regard to the pedagogy, there is the question of the subject-specific and citizenship goals Dutch teachers have in teaching historical empathy. Third, despite the fact that quite a bit is known about historical empathy, concrete guidelines for teaching and practical examples of lessons are scarce, even though teachers require guidelines and supportive materials to effectively teach lessons incorporating historical empathy, as well as to facilitate students' empathetic engagement and perspective-taking with eyewitness accounts. Consequently, knowing how research-based design principles and concrete materials can be used for the professional development of teachers is important. Furthermore, there is a need for more professionalization in historical empathy.

1.3 Research questions and outline of the dissertation

The research context of this dissertation is upper secondary education in the Netherlands. I chose this because upper grade students are often better able to articulate and reflect on historical skills and citizenship skills than younger students. The literature on citizenship and the initial recommendations and goals of curriculum developers in citizenship call for teachers to pay attention to the citizenship competency to take different perspectives in the past and present (SLO 2021, Wansink et al., 2018). With regard to the topic of the lessons, a theme was chosen for which both eyewitnesses as guest speakers and eyewitnesses in a documentary were available and that was sensitive in the past and the present: Israel-Palestine. This topic is part of the compulsory curriculum on the (de) colonization. Although since the attacks on the 7th of October 2023 and the Israel-Palestine war, this topic has become even more sensitive, at the beginning of this thesis (2018), it was seen in a different light than at the end of my research (2024). The current war may have made the urgency of this thesis even greater, and might also have had consequences for the research results if we were to conduct the lesson series now. This will be considered in Chapter 6.

To answer the central question of this dissertation of “*How can history teachers foster empathy in history lessons using eyewitnesses?*”, I conducted four studies with the following questions:

1. What beliefs do history teachers and students have about historical empathy, its objectives and strategies for teaching it?

2. What are the effects of eyewitnesses (guest speakers and eyewitnesses in documentaries) in history class on students' confidence in the ability to empathize, understanding of empathy, attributed importance to empathy, and explaining this importance?
3. How do history teachers implement the six design principles for teaching empathy in history class using eyewitnesses? And what considerations and concerns do teachers have in doing this, and what do they consider areas for improvement?
4. To what extent and how do teachers who participate in a PLC focusing on teaching empathy in history lessons change in their understanding of what (historical) empathy is, of why it is important, and in their confidence to teach it? And what resources are important for teachers' professional growth?

The overall approach in this thesis has characteristics of educational design research in which design principles and lessons based on them are developed and tested on the basis of theoretical and empirical exploration. To create good design principles and teaching materials, it is important to explore the beliefs, goals and concerns of teachers and students (Bakker, 2018; Plomp, 2013). I therefore first investigated the existing beliefs on historical empathy in the field of history education at the secondary level through an interview study with 10 history teachers and 17 of their students (aged 16-17). These interviews consisted of open questions and ranking tasks, with the students' and teachers' responses from the interviews and ranking tasks analyzed qualitatively.

In the development phase, based upon the results of the interviews and literature on historical empathy, I formulated design principles to give teachers guidance in teaching historical empathy, with the aim of encouraging students to take the perspectives of people in past and present. Based on these design principles, in the second study (Chapter 3) I developed and tested a lesson unit making use of eyewitnesses. I examined if these principles worked for students (Study 2) and teachers (Study 3).

The aim of the second study was to gain more insight into how teaching historical empathy can foster students' understanding of empathy, confidence in the ability to empathize, attribution of importance to empathy. In addition, I investigated the differences between two conditions: the use of a live eyewitness (guest speaker) versus eyewitnesses in a documentary. Participants (N=97) were 10th-grade students (pre-university level, 15/16 years

of age) from five classes and two teachers from one urban school in the Netherlands. In this quasi-experimental intervention study, I used a pretest-post-test-follow-up design. The data was collected via questionnaires containing closed and open questions focused on insight in and value attributed to empathy.

The aim of the third study (Chapter 4) was to investigate whether the six design principles of the intervention study worked for teachers. I investigated teachers' experiences with the designed lesson series, which design principles worked, and what challenges teachers encountered. The participants were two teachers from one school. I used a mixed-method approach. The data was collected via video recordings of the lessons for observation of teacher behavior, written observation memos of all lessons and interviews with the two teachers. I analyzed the video recordings, observations and interview transcripts using the six design principles as the main codes. I did this to better establish whether and how these design principles worked in teaching practice, in order that teachers, as they seek to become more proficient in applying these principles, could be better professionalized.

The aim of Study 4 (Chapter 5) was to investigate how teachers can be professionalized in teaching historical empathy and which resources were important for teachers' professional growth. I used the results of Studies 1, 2 and 3 to set up a PLC on historical empathy for teachers. The participants were eight history teachers from eight different schools. I used questionnaires and interviews, supplemented with relevant observations based on the video recordings of the PLC meetings. To answer the research questions, I analyzed the video recordings (transcribed), written observations and post-interviews, with Atlas.Ti, using the domains of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth.

In the chapters that follow (2-5) I present the four studies. Since each chapter is drawn up as a separate journal article, some overlap in theoretical frameworks and context is inevitable. The sixth chapter discusses the general conclusions of this thesis, elaborates on the limitations are elaborated, provides directions for further research and presents practical implications for teachers and other education professionals. All names used for teachers and students in this thesis are pseudonyms.

1.1 Overview of this dissertation

Research questions	Study design	Participants
<i>Chapter 1</i> Introduction		
<i>Chapter 2</i> What beliefs do history teachers and students have about historical empathy, its objectives and strategies for teaching it?	Interview study	10 history teachers and 17 students in secondary school
<i>Chapter 3</i> What are the effects of eyewitnesses (guest speakers and eyewitnesses in documentaries) in history class on students': 1. confidence in the ability to empathize, 2. understanding of empathy, 3. attributed importance to empathy and 4. explaining this importance?	Quasi-experimental intervention study	97 10 th -grade students and 2 history teachers
<i>Chapter 4</i> How do history teachers implement the six design principles for teaching empathy in history class using eyewitnesses? And what considerations and concerns do teachers have in doing this, and what do they consider areas for improvement?	Case-study	2 history teachers
<i>Chapter 5</i> To what extent and how do teachers who participate in a PLC focusing on teaching empathy in history lessons change in their understanding of what (historical) empathy is, of why it is important, and in their confidence to teach it? What resources are important for teachers' professional growth?	Mixed-method	8 history teachers and 1 teacher trainer
<i>Chapter 6</i> General conclusions and discussion		