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### Shifting lenses

*Multiperspectivity and narratives of the Dutch past in secondary history education*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### BACKGROUND

History curricula have been under ongoing discussion in politics and society in the past three decades in the Netherlands. Several different points and themes, such as the role and content of chronological overview knowledge or how to deal with so-called black pages in Dutch history, have been the subject of debate. In several instances, a lack of knowledge about Dutch history was fully alleged. For that matter, a survey was conducted among members of the House of Representatives by the *Historisch Nieuwsblad* in 1996. The article that reported the results was given the highly sensationalized headline “House of Representatives fails to pass history test. ‘William of Orange murdered at Dokkum in 1600 -so much’.” (Rensman, 1996). On the brink of the 21st century, the discussions and resulting policy measures around the intentions and goals of history education intensified.

In these discussions the recurring question of what students should learn about Dutch history arose. Issues at stake were which events and/or persons (if any at all) should be central to the history curriculum. Would the curriculum be a canonical ‘The Story of the Netherlands’, a narrative from a one-sided Dutch perspective? Or rather a representation of the Dutch past embedded in a no less one sided, more European framework of knowledge? The extent to which multiple perspectives in the narratives of the Dutch past are part of history textbooks and history lessons and which perspectives on the Dutch past should be presented in schoolbooks have hardly been investigated. That is why I started to increasingly wonder what students and teachers actually do with textbooks and Dutch history. What do these textbooks tell the reader about Dutch history? What kind of story or narrative about Dutch history is discussed in the classroom? Is there room for alternative stories? Are the narratives presented and constructed in the classroom doing justice to the diversity of the past and is history taught in such a manner that it is meaningful for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds?

Recently, the issue of multiple perspectives on the past has become more urgent and important as a result of the global Black Lives Matter movement and its aftermath, and the longer existing debates about representations of the colonial past in the Netherlands. For example, the discussion and contestation about the statue of J.P. Coen in Hoorn, the Golden Coach and the paneling with images of slavery or the expression ‘Golden Age’ to characterize Dutch society in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Exploring and comparing multiple perspectives can be seen as part of historical thinking and reasoning. Historical thinking and reasoning is one of the main topics in the growing body of research in the Netherlands on history education, e.g., the dissertations of Van Drie, (2005), Logtenberg (2012), De Bruin (2014), Savenije (2014), Van Berkel, (2017), Havekes (2015), Stoel (2017), Tuithof, (2017), Wansink (2017), Huijgen (2018), Van Straaten (2018), De Leur (2019), and Van der Vlies (2019). In several of these studies attention is given to multiperspectivity in the narrative representations of the Dutch past. Wansink (2017) analyzed thinking about multiperspectivity in teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices. De Bruin (2014) analyzed multiperspectivity in heritage education. Van Berkel (2017) discussed the presence of perspectives of perpetrators and victims in representations of the Holocaust in Dutch history textbooks from 1960 to 2010. Van der Vlies (2019) focused on the role of historiography in textbooks in the UK and the Netherlands and its relation to societal developments before 2010.

Different narrative representations come together in the classroom. Textbook representations form the basic subject matter whereupon students reflect when they are learning to think and reason historically. Teachers and students alike not only reflect on existing narrative representations but also produce their own representations of the past in discussion and assignments. Therefore, all these representations of Dutch history and the perspectives they contain are under scrutiny. The focus of this thesis is on the presence of multiple perspectives, or multiperspectivity, in the narrative representations of the Dutch past in textbooks, lessons and the work of students.

In this introduction I will discuss topics that are important for understanding the theme of this thesis. First, the two most important theoretical notions in this thesis, namely, historical narrative and multiperspectivity, will be discussed, followed by an outline of developments in the last three decades of history education to provide a

context for this research and the main research questions in this thesis. After this theoretical framework I will discuss some methodological issues. Next, an overview of five studies will be provided, including the aims and method of each study. Finally, I briefly discuss my position as the author.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

If one inserts *narrative* as a search term in Google Scholar more than 3.5 million hits are generated. The results range from philosophy to medicine, and from cinematography to poetics. In an article on narratives in academic disciplines Meuter (2013) covered the following disciplines: the arts; historical sciences; psychology; psychoanalysis; philosophy; ethics; sociology; theology; pedagogy; law studies; and medicine and philosophy of science and more are forthcoming. These two rather arbitrary examples indicate that the concept of narrative is widely used in academia and beyond. These examples also make clear that a concept such as narrative or narration needs a focus, – in this thesis the focus is on the concept of *historical narrative* as understood by historians and in history education.

History theorist Rüsen (2005, 2008) defined narrative as the specific form in which historians articulate the transformation of the past into history. Thus, history can be understood as time gained sense and meaning. It is these narratives that are central in history education. In an overview article Rigney (2012) gave a summary of the discussion during the last decades about narratives and history. In the wide variety of conceptualizations of “narrative,” a set of core elements stood out: a narrative consists of actors and instances of agency (for example, individuals or collectivities) who follow a “plot” of (chrono)logically connected events (Rigney, 2012). Narratives are not only descriptive but also interpretative (Roth, 2016; Rüsen, 2005). Below, it is discussed how each of the mentioned elements of the narrative contribute to interpretation.

With respect to agency Seixas (2012) remarked that “on the one hand

are the actions that express human agency or autonomy; on the other hand, are the social structures and social constraints within which these actions are played out” (p. 540). The answers to the question embedded in this proposition of who or what is the motor of historical change and the consequences for teaching history is under ongoing discussion by historians and history educators (Barton, 2012a; Peck et al., 2011; Wilke et al., 2019). Seixas takes from historiography a variety of views on agency, ranging from “great white men’s” history to attention to voiceless groups and individuals such as enslaved people, workers, and women. Furthermore, he concludes that the choice of agency has consequences for teaching history that might contribute to democratic citizenship (Seixas, 2012).

A useful description of what connected events in a historical narrative stand for was given by historian and theorist Munslow (2006). To him historical narrative is a frame of explanation that accounts for the occurrence of events and human actions. Through colligation – in its simplest form – two seemingly separate events were brought under the same heading giving it an explanatory and interpretive purport (Munslow, 2006). Based on the work of the history philosopher Walsh, Lévesque (2008) argued that colligatory concepts find their base in “well-founded fact” and at the same time illuminate these facts. The first proposition would imply that colligatory concepts are intrinsic parts of historical processes. The second, however, can be characterized as hindsight after the fact and at the disposition of both historical actors and historians (Lévesque, 2008). Emphasis is placed on this second element; these concepts constitute in themselves a narrative frame defining a beginning and end. For example, concepts such as Enlightenment, the Cold War, Reconstruction (in Dutch *Wederopbouw*) “tell” in themselves a story. As such colligatory concepts play an essential role in understanding and interpreting the past, as they have a meaning and sense embedded in “the sediments of different historical times” (Castorina et al., 2015, p.132). To students the construction and analysis of colligatory concepts may help them to better understand a continuity and change between historical events (Lévesque, 2008). These concepts bring about an understanding of history as an interpretive process that is reflected in specific historical narratives (Castorina et al., 2015; Lee, 2005).

With respect to plot and emplotment Munslow brought forward that

the actual emplotment of a historical narrative is bound not only to past reality but also to the construction of the narrative and dominant metanarratives (Munslow, 2007). White (1975) argued that historians employ basically four different modes of emplotment: romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire. Zerubavel (2003) stated that the emplotment of historical narratives could also be organized in terms of both “rise and fall” or “progress” and in cyclic terms. Lévesque (2008) proposed that the concepts of “progress” and “decline” have become part of the evaluative arsenal of the historian on how to interpret the past. White, Zerubavel and Lévesque all indicated that it is by choice of the historian which kind of emplotment is presented in the narrative.

The formation of the plot of the narrative configuration of time could be regarded as a key element (Eckel, 2010). This configuration combines a more objective chronology of events established in time with subjectively experienced time (experiences and interpretations) (Carter, 2003; Grever, 2001; Grever & Jansen, 2001). For example, the Weimar Republic was the result of an epoch or the start of a new episode (Eckel, 2010). In other words, this configuration of time refers to the difference between narrative time and narrated time. Narrative time is the time needed to “tell” or read a story (Bode, 2011). Narrated time refers to the episode in the past covered in the narration (Lämmert, 1955; Scheffel et al., 2014).

### *Narratives of the national past in history education*

As in many other countries the narratives of the national past have a central place in the curriculum since it became a school subject in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Netherlands. Although the narrative representations of this national past underwent many changes under influence of major societal developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Van der Vlies, 2019), they are still an important component in history education. As in many other countries in the Western world the narratives of the respective national pasts are centered around the origins and history of the nation-state. Based upon the works of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983), it is argued that these national narratives exemplify the constructedness of the nation and are perpetuated in history education (Carretero, 2017; Castorina et al., 2015; Grever & Van der Vlies, 2017; Lopez et al., 2014; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2017; Van Alphen &

Carretero, 2015; Van Havere et al., 2017).

With respect to the reproduction and perpetuation of national narratives Wertsch (2008, 2012) stated that schematic templates according to abstract categories function as organizers of specific narratives. In these templates embedded in the sociocultural setting of modern states episodic and configurative dimensions fuse together in collective memory and support identity formation (Grever, 2006; Grever, 2020). In history textbooks specific narratives are presented that conform to certain narrative templates. For example, Wertsch (2004) compared texts written by two generations of Russian students about the role of Russia/the Soviet Union during WW II. Although these students lived through completely different episodes (during the Soviet era and after the dissolving of the Soviet Union) both texts could be characterized as “triumph-over-alien-forces” narratives that could easily be applied to other episodes in Russian history (invasions by Mongolian forces, Napoleon or Hitler). In other countries comparable templates could be discerned: in the US the template of “manifest destiny”; and in the Netherlands Grever (2006) proposed a schematic narrative template of a “small country bravely fighting for its freedoms.”

Based upon a series of studies into history education in several countries Carretero et al. (2012) elaborated on what the common characteristics could be of master narratives of the national past. He and his fellow researchers came up with six features that these templates bore in common (Carretero, 2011; Carretero et al., 2012; Carretero & Bermudez, 2012; Castorina et al., 2015).

First, a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion that helps to constitute the historical subject. Positive aspects of the past are assigned to “us,” and negative aspects assigned to “others.” An example of “others” is the occupying forces and the collaborators with Nazi Germany during the Second World War in the Netherlands (Slegtenhorst, 2019) or the role of immigrants in Dutch history (Weiner, 2014). Second, identification possibilities are both cognitive and affective anchors that help to form the concept of a “nation,” such as the commemoration of the victims of the Second World War on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May and the festivities celebrating the anniversary of the end of the occupation of the Netherlands the next day. Third, Carretero (2011) mentions the presence or absence of mythical or heroic characters and motives. In Dutch history these “heroes” could be Prince William of Orange, Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, “Soldier of

Orange” or Anne Frank (Slegtenhorst, 2019). A fourth feature is the search for freedom or territory as a characteristic theme. The Eighty Years’ War, the Napoleonic era, the Dutch colonial conquests, and the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands are feasible episodes to illustrate this feature in the Netherlands. Fifth, a master narrative contains moral orientations, even to justify the use of violence. Finally, a characteristic feature is the view of the nation and nationals as pre-existing political entities. The Dutch Revolt as the origin of the Dutch nation-state is an example of this type of essentialist thinking. In addition to the question whether these features are necessary and essential for any schematic narrative template, at least these characteristics can be useful as heuristic in identifying the resonance of a template in the concrete narratives of a nation.

As elsewhere in the Netherlands, academic historians analyze the constructedness of the nation and accompanying national narratives. For example, in 2010 a special issue of *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* appeared entitled “The International Relevance of Dutch History.” The issue included studies about the past of the Netherlands situated in a broad context of international developments, mutual influence and comparison with other countries as important parameters and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. For a nonspecialist readership, this development in academia was expressed in publications such as *Wereldgeschiedenis van Nederland [World history of the Netherlands]* (Heerma van Voss et al., 2018).

These insights into the characteristics of historical narratives and templates of the national past can be used as tools to investigate history textbooks, lessons and lesson designs, and student work. In this thesis we analyze the instances of agency, plot and emplotment, narrative/narrated time and the six features of narrative templates of the national past.

## MULTIPERSPECTIVITY

Multiperspectivity is the other key concept in this thesis. This concept of multiperspectivity is a widely used concept and defined in many different ways, primarily in studies with a theoretical emphasis. From an epistemological point of view scholars have argued that multiple perspectives are needed to avoid determinism (Grever, 2020). Multiple



perspectives might help to transform essentialist narratives about a nation's past into narratives that better express the interpretive character of history (Barton, 2012b; Carretero, 2017; Peck, 2010).

Multiperspectivity implies the admission of perspectives of different historical actors, historians or contemporaries and consequently the admission of possible alternative narratives – each with their own narrational voices and perspectives (Munslow, 2016). Metaphorically, multiperspectivity is like looking through different and shifting lenses at the past generating a variety of narrative representations of the past.

Stradling (2003) stressed the necessity to relate and to compare different perspectives to each other to enable a deeper understanding of the historical relationships between nations, majorities, and minorities in and outside national boundaries. He argued that multiperspectivity can enhance historical thinking and promote democratic citizenship. Recently, the Council of Europe (2018) stipulated the importance of a multiperspective approach and that national narratives are “responsive to sociocultural diversity rather than being mono-cultural” (p. 26).

One of the first to define multiperspectivity in the context of history education was Bergmann (1979, 2000). He defined multiperspectivity in relation to perspectives of subjects or agents in the past. He stated that multiperspectivity implies that the historical question at hand is presented by at least two involved actors each from a different perspective related to their social position and interest. The historical perspectives are bound in time and space or what he called *Standortgebundenheit* or positionality (Bergmann, 2000). These perspectives of historical actors and their positionality can be defined as a first form of perspectivity. However, it is not enough that two persons from the past react in the same historical situation. In a more general, sense multiperspectivity implies that in any narrative, some friction is necessary between the representations by the historical actors to underpin that together, different perspectives form an interpretation of the past by the historian (Bergmann, 2000). Bergmann places strong emphasis on the perspectives of historical actors being as close to the historical event as possible and expressed in primary source materials but less emphasis on how historians over time represented the same past events.

Another mode of thought on multiperspectivity was developed by Wansink et al. (2018). They introduced a temporal model of

multiperspectivity and made a distinction between the perspectives of subjects in the past, of subjects between the past and present and of subjects in the present. Like Bergmann, they consider the perspectives of agents in the past. However, in addition to Bergmann, they stipulate the mediating role of what they call the subjects between past and present, especially the perspectives of historians. These perspectives of historians who think and write about the past – in time separated from the present and the past – constituted the second form of perspectivity (Wansink et al., 2018). Each historian constructs his or her own historical narrative. In this construction the emplotment of the narrative, choice of certain actors and instances of agency and ordered events are expressed by asking particular questions and the selection of particular sources. Historical perspectives change over time due to developments in society and among historians as active participants in society. The perspectives that historians present are therefore also constrained in time and place (Grever & Adriaansen, 2019). For example, the perspective on Columbus and the “Discovery of America” has changed over time (Carretero et al., 2012). The third form of perspectivity that Wansink et al. (2018) discern, is offered by the perspectives of students and their teachers situated in the present. Teachers add their own perspectives to the narratives by choosing history textbooks, adding/skipping materials and providing explanations. Just as historians in the past, teachers are also constrained in their own positionality as they perceive the past and history in the present (Wansink, 2017). Students bring their own perspectives, prior knowledge, influences of popular culture, values and family practices into the classroom when they engage in making a representation of the past (Lévesque, 2005).

Wansink et al. (2018) thus draw particular attention to historiography, the role of historians and the historicity of representations of the past in addition to the positionality of historical actors. The focus brought to historiography and the role of historians can help to understand history as an interpretation of the past from multiple perspectives.

Whereas Wansink considered multiperspectivity over time, from past to present, Grever (2020) and Stradling (2003) and others situated multiperspectivity more in the same time layer of the past. Within this layer multiperspectivity could take shape through the following:

- a. the employment of history with its choice of events, chronologies, scale (e.g., local, (trans)national or global) and plots (e.g., progression) (Grever, 2020; Grever & Van Boxtel, 2014);
- b. the selection of historical actors and their perspectives determined by social class, gender, age, ability, race and ethnicity (Grever & Van Boxtel, 2014; Stradling 2003; Weiner, 2014); and
- c. emphasizing particular dimensions (e.g., political, social, economic, cultural, military, and religious history) (Grever, 2020; Grever & Van Boxtel, 2014; Stradling, 2003).

These dimensions can be understood as forms of historiography wherein the choice of a particular form of history influence the represented agency, plotlines and order of events (Grever, 2020). This thesis analyzes how multiperspectivity is addressed by focusing on various historical actors, types or dimensions of history and on historiographical issues of interpretation.

#### MULTIPERSPECTIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN DUTCH UPPER SECONDARY HISTORY EDUCATION

In this section the concept of multiperspectivity is described in the context of the discussions and developments in Dutch secondary history education divided into two periods that marked major changes in the curriculum and exam program. Three aspects play a role in this classification: first, the pedagogic discussions; second, societal discussions about the history curriculum; and third, developments in the academic discipline.

##### *1981 – 2001 Positionality takes root in Dutch history education*

The abovementioned concept of positionality (in Dutch *standplaatsgebondenheid*) was introduced in Dutch history education in the seventies (Van der Vlies, 2019). It took, however, two decades until positionality was firmly embedded in the national exam program. During this period authors incorporated increasing numbers of elements of historical thinking and reasoning in their history textbooks used in

secondary education (Van Boxtel et al., 2020; Van der Vlies, 2019).

It took until 1993 before positionality became an integral part of the history curriculum and exams. Since then, positionality has become part and parcel of the Dutch history curriculum next to thinking about causes and consequences, (dis)continuity, fact and opinion (Van Boxtel et al., 2020). The interpretational character of history was given firm ground with the introduction of the concept of positionality and, related to this concept, the introduction of the use of primary source material to students (Klein, 2010). This time period was the heyday of history as interpretation and a focus on teaching second order concepts or in Dutch *structuurbegrippen*. In summary, during this period learning to understand the positionality of historical actors was embedded in the formal curriculum. However, attention to the historiographical developments and perspectives generated by historians did not receive explicit focus in the formal curriculum.

During this period, developments in academic historiography found their bearings in history education. The dominance of political history up to that moment faced competition from other subdisciplines (Van der Vlies, 2019) and, consequently, the introduction of other actors and instances of agency, elements of scale or other forms of emplotment in history such as socioeconomic history, women's history and cultural history. Not only social, socioeconomic and cultural history but also women's history had gained a firm foothold at the university. The *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* [Yearbook of Women's History] issued its tenth volume in 1990. It took until that year for a different kind of perspective to be introduced in the exams. For the first time, the actions, experiences and perspectives of women were made a central issue in the exams with the topic *Continuity and change: the position of women in the Netherlands and the United States, 1929 -1969* (Continuïteit en verandering: de positie van de vrouw in Nederland en de Verenigde Staten, 1929-1969). In the following years the restriction of the exam themes to the period after 1917 was abandoned. From then on, themes such as *the Dutch Revolt* (exam in 1995/1996) or *Europe and the outside world, 1150 – 1350* (exam in 1998/1999) were made possible (Van der Kaap, 2014b).

An important pedagogical change was initiated by the government in 1993. In the general curriculum of the first three years of secondary education – not only for history – an emphasis was placed on the

application of knowledge, the development of skills and the coherence between different school subjects (Van der Vlies, 2019). In the following years of upper secondary education, this compulsory program was followed by an extended study of topics and further acquisition of historical thinking skills (Van Boxtel & Grever, 2011). This program was implemented in 1998/1999. Students had to choose one of the four so called profiles. In two of these profiles students follow history courses that conform to the examination program. In the history examination programs of these profiles there were several instances wherein history as interpretation was stipulated. For example, one of the exam requirements was formulated as “when analyzing sources and interpretations, [students] recognize the place and time of others and themselves, and the factors that may influence them” (exam requirement A.3; CvTE, 2002). Multiperspectivity in this program was mostly limited to the perspectives of agents and historical dimensions in the past. Historiography was not part of the program and present perspectives were mostly absent. Present perspectives were only formulated as “compare current and historical rituals and customs according to form and meaning” in one of the requirements of the subdomain *Popular culture: the formation of everyday life*.

#### *2001 – 2015 The introduction of a chronological frame of reference*

The developments in Dutch history education in the previous period came under pressure at the end of the twentieth century and start of the next century. That pressure was not only a consequence of the observed lack of factual knowledge of Dutch history among parliamentarians that history education was debated. As elsewhere in Europe and abroad, history education in the Netherlands became part of a complex discussion about the position of national history in a changing globalizing world (Parkes, 2012; Van der Vlies, 2019). Criticism arose about the focus in the national central examination on only two historical topics. Students were held to have only some factual knowledge about these two topics and no general overview knowledge (Van der Vlies, 2019). Together with the outcomes of the survey among parliamentarians this observation formed the start of a development wherein the acquisition of factual overview knowledge became more important.

The first step in this development was made by the appointment of an advisory committee by the Dutch government in 1998. The committee

– called after its chairperson “Commissie De Wit” – acknowledged that there was a divide between common practices of teaching history and what was considered necessary in society. The committee formulated several dilemmas such as between the span of history that has to be taught in a limited time of available lessons. Another dilemma that the committee brought forward was between the nature and the place of skills weighted against acquiring chronological overview knowledge (De Wit, 1998). The position of the committee in this discussion was that “the chronological framework should be guiding because of the primary importance to be attached to the development of time awareness” (De Wit, 1998, p. 19). The committee criticized how sources were used in secondary education as it was too much an unnecessary reflection of professional practice (De Wit, 1998). With the focus on chronology and their critique of historical thinking skills, one could state that the advice of the De Wit committee was to take a step back to teaching history as a school subject wherein the introduction and discussion of multiple perspectives faded into the background. However, this change was not effectuated in the new exam program that came into effect in 1998/1999. Three years later a report of the national institute for curriculum development in the Netherlands (SLO) stated that there were no changes with respect to historical reasoning (Greep & Rutgers, 2001, p.18). Consequently, interpretational aspects in teaching and learning history were still prominently present in the curriculum and in the exams in upper levels of secondary education.

Meanwhile, the general political context had changed considerably. Through a highly controversial essay entitled *The Multicultural Drama*, opinion maker Scheffer announced in 2000 the end of multicultural society in the Netherlands. This announcement engendered a fierce broad discussion about (the failure of) the multicultural society and related questions about the nature of the Dutch identity. The Netherlands saw the rise of populist right-wing parties which also inserted national identity and national history as an issue on the political agenda. The events of 9/11 fueled these debates even more.

Against this background the report of the De Rooij committee (named after the chairperson of the advisory committee) was published 2001. In this report no canonical history knowledge was elaborated, in contrast to what the previous De Wit committee had advised. Instead, a chronological frame of reference was offered. The De Rooij committee

aimed to strike a balance between historical overview knowledge, historical understanding and historical skills. The committee did not substantiate what this overview knowledge was about. They only specified the frame of reference into 49 characteristic aspects divided over a chronology of ten eras. In addition, the committee advised the introduction of so-called diachronic themes (De Rooij, 2001). For example, *Family, livelihood and household* or *Western and non-Western Cultures*. The national exams of this intended curriculum were to be based upon nonspecified and not previously studied historical cases. In these cases, students had to reasonably address a historical problem to show that they were able to comply with the standards of historical reasoning as defined in the examination program (De Rooij, 2001). Taken together, these approaches should make an essential contribution to the formation of historical awareness and thus to citizenship education (De Rooij, 2001). Critics of the report argued that the framework was too much oriented on Western European history and too much reflecting white men's policies and the proposed order of the ten eras implied a certain essentialist interpretation of history. This framework undermined the essential multiperspectivity of history (Van Boxtel, 2009). Nevertheless, the proposals of the De Rooij committee still provided ample opportunities to further historical thinking and reasoning, to include multiperspectivity and to offer teachers and students opportunities to form their own narrative representations of the past.

However, the reports of the De Wit and De Rooij committees were discussed and formulated mainly from within the world of history education, this approach was not employed with the drawing up of the canon of Dutch history and culture that the Oostrom committee presented in 2006. The introduction of this canon by Royal Decree came about in the period that the Netherlands had seen two political murders. First, politician and populist Pim Fortuyn was murdered in 2002, nine days before the general elections. The elections brought his party an unexpected number of seats and formed a challenge to the existing party establishment. Two years after his death, Pim Fortuyn was elected in 2004 as number one in the TV program "The Greatest Dutchman of all time" [De grootste Nederlander aller tijden] before William of Orange. Next, Islam critic and filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered in 2004. The aim of the formulation of a national canon was to contribute to the formation and maintenance of Dutch identity. The canon was particularly

embraced by primary education and the world of museums and heritage institutions, but less in secondary education. The report received firm criticism from the community inside history education, for example in articles in the journal of the Dutch association of history teachers (Boom, 2007a, 2007b; Klein, 2006; Ribbens, 2006; Van Oudheusden, 2007; Wilschut, 2006). Criticism from academic historians was added to the above, for example, in articles in diverse bundles (Grever et al., 2006; Grever & Stuurman, 2007). The minister eventually had to decide that the canon was only a source of inspiration, but not made compulsory in secondary education. Nevertheless, the introduction of the canon contributed to the question of the content of the curriculum in secondary education with respect to the history of the Netherlands, which was defined very broadly by the De Rooij committee – also with regard to Dutch history. In De Rooij's report a limited number of the characteristic features were explicitly related to the history of the Netherlands. The orientation on Western European history in the curriculum had as a consequence that specific national Dutch history did not have a dominant position secondary history education (Wilschut, 2017).

*2015 onwards: a frame of reference together with historical thinking and reasoning?*

Starting in 2015, the examinations were no longer devoted to annually changing topics but to an overview of knowledge about the ten eras alongside the historical skills incorporated in the examination program. The examination was based upon a historical case; the diachronic themes that were proposed by the De Rooij committee were, however, no part of the examination program. From 2005 onwards, publishers developed new textbooks based upon the ten eras and 49 characteristic features. The texts from these textbooks were the subject of research in this thesis.

Recently, the term *Historical Consciousness* has been rephrased by the official College for Tests and Examinations [College voor Toetsen en Examens, CvTE] into *Historical Thinking and Reasoning* (CvTE, 2020). In 2020, the state of affairs is such that multiperspectivity is firmly anchored in the specifications of the exam program. These specifications are formulated as being largely organized around three clustered themes of historical thinking and reasoning: a. time, subdivided into *time and chronology*, *causality*, and *continuity and change*; b. interpretation, subdivided into *positionality* and *source and question* [emphasis added,



MK]; and c. significance of and judgement about the past (CvTE, 2020). Thus, all three temporal forms of perspectivity (perspectives of agents in the past, of all kinds of historiography between the past and present and of subjects in the present) discussed above are present in the program. However, the perspectives of historians remain somewhat implicit and could be constructed by the combination of the formulated positionality, significance and judgments of the past and the constructed character of historical narratives.

The discussions in the last decades about the history curriculum seem to revolve around two issues between which there is a certain tension: on the one hand the place of historical thinking and reasoning wherein history as interpretation is embedded and on the other hand the place and function of acquiring overview knowledge structured by a tenera framework. The observation that through the orientation on Western European history a specific national Dutch history is not a dominant characteristic of the curriculum, could give rise to the expectation that presented narratives of Dutch history are less characterized by essentialism or under a strong influence of a master narrative. With the attention devoted to positionality and history as interpretation in the intended curriculum program, one could expect that there is sufficient room to discuss multiple perspectives in classrooms or in history textbooks. On the other hand, a strong focus on acquiring a chronological frame of reference could consequently have substantial time costs, and thus, less attention can be given to learning to think about multiperspectivity and history as interpretation.

In light of these developments in the history curriculum, the question can be raised concerning what kind of narratives about the Dutch past are presented and constructed and how and to what extent multiperspectivity is part of these narratives.

## MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The studies in this thesis endeavor to provide an answer to the following question: How and to what extent are multiple perspectives expressed in the narrative representations of the Dutch past in history textbooks, and by history teachers and students in upper secondary education?

This main question is further divided into five subquestions that will be answered in the subsequent chapters:

- (a) which narratives and knowledge of the national past do students construct after finishing secondary education? (study 1, chapter 2);
- (b) what are the distinguishing features of the narrative of the Dutch Revolt in secondary school history textbooks from the Netherlands and Flanders and to what extent is multiperspectivity part of these narratives of the Dutch Revolt? (study 2; chapter 3);
- (c) to what extent are the narratives of the Netherlands during World War II presented in a multiperspectival way in the history classroom and what are the features of metaphorical language in the perspectives of these narratives? (study 3, chapter 4);
- (d) to what extent do teachers include multiple perspectives in their lesson designs based upon a text that includes multiple perspectives compared to a schoolbook history text containing fewer perspectives and what are considerations of teachers for the lessons they designed? (study 4; chapter 5);
- (e) what is the degree of multiperspectivity in students' representations when they engage in text processing assignments based upon a schoolbook history text that contains multiple perspectives compared to a schoolbook history text containing fewer perspectives? (study 5; chapter 6).

## METHODOLOGY

This thesis is about how multiperspectivity is presented in narrative representations of the Dutch past by students, in history textbook texts, and by history teachers in their lessons and lesson designs. The focus of the studies was particularly on the upper levels of higher general secondary education (in Dutch: havo). In four of the five studies, the main source of data was school history textbooks. Furthermore, the following data were used: texts written by students, students' assignments, lesson designs, observations of lessons, and interviews with

teachers.

## PARTICIPANTS

The focus in this thesis is on history education in upper levels of higher general secondary education [havo, hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs], the intermediate track that prepares students for universities of applied sciences. We chose students in the upper levels of havo because many students follow this track. In 2019, 61,200 students followed the havo track, 41,700 students followed the vwo track (preuniversity education) and 108,100 students followed the vmbo track (secondary vocational education). In 2019 60% of havo students had chosen history in their combination of examination subjects (Alberts & Erens, 2019). Havo students amount almost twice the number of students in vwo who took an exam in history (in 2019 havo: 36,664 students; vwo: 18,611 students). Vmbo students were not considered because the exam program of vmbo does not follow the chronological frame of reference. Havo students in upper secondary education follow two years of history lessons if they have chosen this subject. In 2015 the average number of history lessons in upper secondary education was five lessons of fifty minutes a week divided over 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade (Van der Kaap & Visser, 2016).

Havo students participated in the studies in chapters 4 and 6. The participants in the study on prospective teachers' narratives and knowledge about Dutch history (chapter 2) were 26 first-year students in their first week of their history teachers' training program from the University of Applied Sciences of Amsterdam. Most of the students had just graduated from havo in the previous summer. The teacher who participated in the study reported in chapter 4 was recruited through our personal network. The student participants were twenty-two students (approximately 16 – 17 years of age) in 11<sup>th</sup> grade havo and were all in a class together. Eighteen history teachers participated in study 4 (chapter 5). These teachers were recruited through the professional network LinkedIn®. The teachers had experience in 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade havo history classes in different regions of the country (both (sub)urban and rural). The participants in the study on the influence of multiperspectivity in history textbooks on students' representations of a historical event (chapter 6) were 10<sup>th</sup> grade havo students (approximately

15 – 16 years of age).

All participants – students and teachers – gave active consent.

#### ANALYZING MULTIPERSPECTIVITY

To analyze multiperspectivity we directed our lens on the narratives that were presented in history schoolbooks, constructed in lessons or lesson designs and students' work. Consequently, it was necessary to operationalize the concept of multiperspectivity into specific indicators. In the subsequent studies I will describe in more detail how these indicators were operationalized. The presence of multiperspectivity will be analyzed in the narrative representations in the following ways.

First, the presence of a narrative template and master narrative of the national past (Grever, 2020; Wertsch, 2004) is analyzed along the six features of an essentialist narrative that Carretero et al. (2012) employ to indicate how open the narratives are to multiple perspectives. Second, the emplotment of the historical narrative is analyzed on the choice of historical agents, events, chronologies, scale (e.g., local, (trans)national or global) and historical dimensions (Grever, 2020; Grever & Van Boxtel, 2014) and specific plots (e.g., progression or decline) (Lévesque, 2008; Zerubavel, 2003). Related to territorial scale, to what extent does the narrative transcend strict national boundaries by incorporating transnational or local and regional elements? For example, reference is made to developments elsewhere in Europe or more widely abroad such as the consequences of the policies of Philip II in the Mediterranean against the Turkish sultan. With regard to the emplotment, which events and dates and colligatory concepts such as “revolt” or “civil war” were presented? Consistent with Munslow's and Levesque's ideas about how colligatory concepts frame a narrative (Lévesque, 2008; Munslow, 2006), I investigate the metaphoricality of verbs and substantives. Such metaphorical verbs and substantives can make a perspective more persuasive, as metaphors bring to the attention particular attributes of an issue or event as they evoke familiarity and often highlight certain aspects while downplaying others (Bougher, 2015). Furthermore, the emplotment of history is also expressed in how the narrated time is converted to narrative time wherein the latter is expressed as the number of sentences that the author employs to narrate particular events (Eckel,

2010; Scheffel et al., 2014).

Third, with respect to historical actors and their perspectives, is there attention not only to “great, white males” but also to ordinary people, minority groups and collectivities outside the Netherlands? For example, is not only the positionality of noblemen such as the Catholic King Philip II and Protestant Prince William of Orange considered, but also the perspectives of ordinary people?

Finally, the inclusion of multiple perspectives can be promoted by focusing on various types or dimensions of history and by addressing historiographical issues of interpretation. Therefore, narrative representations are analyzed on the occurrence of more than one historical dimension. For example, could another dimension such as the socioeconomic or cultural dimension next to the political dimension in the narrative be discerned? Although the choice of agency, emplotment and chronology is in itself a historiographical expression and in more or less a silent debate with other interpretations, through explicit presentation of alternative interpretations or points of historiographical debate multiple perspectives could be admitted into the narrative. For this reason, the narrative representations are analyzed on the presence of historiographical perspectives.

#### CHOICE OF TOPIC

The choice of topic for our studies was based upon the following considerations. First, the topic had to be covering the Dutch past, present in Dutch history textbooks and included in the official curriculum. Due to the curricular exigencies, the chronological frame of reference, and the ten eras and 49 characteristic features laid down in the exam program, our choice was narrowed to the following three characteristic features: the Dutch Revolt, the Golden Age, and German occupation of the Netherlands during the Second World War. Certainly, other characteristic features could also be applied to the Dutch past, but are formulated in a more generic, European oriented manner. Second, the topic had to be relevant regarding its role in shaping the nation and Dutch national identity, often in relation to war and warfare. In the process of nation building the experience of war helps to define the ‘other’ as the enemy and enhances an awareness of a common belonging

to the nation (Crawford & Foster, 2007). Third, a rich historiographical corpus with multiple perspectives and interpretations had to be available to analyze in which possible historiographical perspectives were presented or constructed in the narrative representations.

For the choice of the topic of the Dutch Revolt, there were the following specific considerations. In the Netherlands the topic of the Dutch Revolt is considered relevant for its role in shaping the nation and Dutch national identity. Second, it offers possibilities to look from the outside to the history of the Low Countries (Grever, 2020) – for example, a Spanish contemporary perspective or a modern Flemish/Belgian perspective on a partly shared past. Third, Dutch history teachers consider the Dutch Revolt especially useful for teaching aspects of multiperspectivity (Wansink et al., 2017). Finally, there is a rich historiographical literature and debate on the Dutch Revolt, with multiple perspectives and interpretations (Pollmann, 2009) – including, for example, debates on the concepts of war, revolt, and civil strife (Groenveld, 2018; Van Nierop, 2009; Woltjer, 1994); the conflict’s European ramifications (Parker, 2014; Rodríguez Pérez, 2008); and the shift in perceptions of the *Beeldenstorm* (the wave of iconoclasm that accompanied the Revolt) from an attitude of embarrassment to one of a canonized event (Pollmann, 2016).

In addition to the topic of the Dutch Revolt, the topic of the German occupation of the Netherlands is subject of our research in chapter 3. In this study, some historiographical perspectives are part of the analysis, such as when thinking about accommodation, resistance, and collaboration, the consequences of the moral dichotomy of “right” or “wrong” (Blom, 2007) or the influence of the “Dutch paradox”: the Dutch reputation of tolerance, yet a high percentage of Dutch Jews were victims of the Holocaust (Hondius, 2010); and last, the history of the Holocaust as “sensitive” history because of issues such as the conflation with the Israel-Palestine conflict (Goldberg & Savenije, 2018; Savenije & Goldberg, 2019).

## ANALYZING HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

### *History textbook research*

In this thesis texts in history textbooks are an important source. The

analysis of history textbooks is a well-established branch in educational research. After the Second World War textbook research was enthusiastically furthered by international institutions such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe with the main aim of supporting mutual understanding between nations and peoples (Foster, 2011). On this terrain the activities and publications of the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig have to be mentioned. This institute has provided a continuous output of research on this matter since 1951 – for example, in the bringing together of academics of (former) opposing nations in the endeavor to produce a common agreed-upon textbook such as the French/German textbook on Europe after 1945 (Geiss & De Quintre 2011).

Over the years, the attention shifted to forms of research wherein history textbooks were analyzed through lenses of those groups who were absent in history textbooks along lines of class, race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability (Foster, 2011) – a shift that is, for example, reflected in the issues of the *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* of the Georg Eckert Institute (Lässig, 2009). These studies reflect from a historiographical point of view which perspectives are missing and how these omissions can be remediated. In the Netherlands, for example, Beening (2001) analyzed textbooks published from 1750 to 2000 on the representation of Germany and its history under the heading “Between Admiration and Vilification,” and Van Berkel (2017) compared the representation of the topic of the Holocaust in German and Dutch history textbooks published between 1960 and 2010. Van der Vlies (2019) studied how national narratives were perpetuated in Dutch and English textbooks published between 1920 and 2010. These three studies have in common a historiographic approach. However, there is little research on how and to what extent the national past is actually represented in current textbooks and how these representations play a role in the history classroom. Furthermore, little is known about what kind of representations students construct or what kind of lessons Dutch teachers design based on history textbooks. In the Netherlands there is hardly any research on the national past as it is represented in textbooks and seen by both teacher and students.

*History textbooks in Dutch secondary education*

In contrast to those countries wherein the government dictates the content and form of history textbooks, in the Netherlands schools and teachers are free to choose which textbook (or none at all) they opt to use in the classroom. However, this choice does not mean that the textbooks and the choices of the teachers are not affected by the examination program and the debates about history education. Although the editors and publishers do not need governmental approval to publish textbooks, they are all keenly aware of the requirements of the national exam programs. At least four publishing houses offer history textbooks (Van der Kaap, 2014a). A survey of Dutch upper secondary school teachers showed that only 5% of the teachers did not use a history textbook (Van der Kaap, 2014a). Teachers have their preferred textbooks mostly in use over a longer period. The choice to substitute the textbook with one from another publishing house often coincides with changes in the examination program.

In the studies in chapters 3 and 4 two textbooks were analyzed that are often used in upper secondary havo: *MeMo: Geschiedenis voor de bovenbouw havo* [MeMo: History for upper levels of havo] (2011) and *Geschiedenis Werkplaats (GW)* [History workshop] (2012) (Beukers & Klein, 2011; Van der Geugten & Verkuil, 2012). These textbooks were designed to be in accordance with the exam program. In 2014, *GW* was used by 53% of the teachers, while 17% used *MeMo* (Van der Kaap, 2014a). To emphasize the analysis of perspectives in the narrative in the Dutch textbooks, these textbooks were compared with two Flemish textbooks in chapter 3. The Flemish textbooks were *Storia 4* and *Historia 4 ASO*, used in the fourth grade of General Secondary Education (*Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs*, ASO), the Flemish equivalent of havo (Goris, 2007; Van de Voorde, 2014). However, to gain insight into which narrative representations are constructed and presented in the classroom, it is not sufficient to analyze only history textbooks. The study presented in chapter 4 will analyze the text of the textbook in *MeMo* together with other classroom materials such as a videoclip, excerpts from an autobiographical novel and students' assignments. Teachers not only use their school textbooks in their lessons but also select which parts of the textbook they will include or exclude in their lesson and what kind of materials they would like to add to their lessons (Foster, 2011; Foster & Crawford, 2006). Textbooks selection and additional materials provide



an important source of information to students when they construct a narrative representation of the past, but this is not their exclusive source of information. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine other factors outside the classroom that influence student representations, such as their own family histories, and history in popular culture and media.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis is built around five chapters. Each chapter can be read as an independent study with its own theoretical framework, research questions, methods, results and conclusions because each study is also published or submitted to be published as an article. In this section, I will give an overview of each study, its research aims and questions, methods and participants.

### CHAPTER 2 "SMALL COUNTRY, GREAT AMBITIONS." PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' NARRATIVES AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DUTCH HISTORY

In this chapter the knowledge and narratives that students have regarding Dutch history after secondary education are explored. The main research question that guided this study was as follows: Which narratives and knowledge of the national past do students construct after finishing secondary education? The participants were 26 prospective history teachers (first-year students) at the very start of their teacher training program. Most of them had just finished secondary education *havo*. They were asked to complete a task consisting of three parts in the following order: (a) create a mind map about the Netherlands after 1500, (b) write an essay on the main lines of the Dutch past after 1500, and (c) answer a questionnaire on their social and cultural background. The central focus was on the analysis of the essays, whereas the mind-maps were considered to corroborate the findings in the essay. The essays were analyzed according to the historical actors, dates and periods, events and developments they mentioned, and the narratives and possible underlying templates they constructed.

### CHAPTER 3 NARRATIVES AND MULTIPERSPECTIVITY IN DUTCH SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

In this chapter, the representation of the Dutch Revolt in Dutch and Flemish history textbooks was examined. What are the distinguishing features of the narrative of the Dutch Revolt in secondary school history textbooks from the Netherlands and Flanders and to what extent is multiperspectivity part of these narratives of the Dutch Revolt?

Two Dutch history textbooks were analyzed and compared with two Flemish textbooks for upper secondary education. First, we discerned at the sentence level the respective building blocks of the narrative (agency, dates, events, geographical scale and dimensions, and metaphoricity). We also determined the narrative time (the relative attention given to a certain development or event) by counting the number of sentences related to a specific date, event, theme, or development. The metaphoricity of verbs and substantives was identified by applying the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) (Steen et al., 2010). Second, we analyzed to what extent these narratives were open to multiple perspectives based upon our findings related to the building blocks and the narrative's metaphoricity.

### CHAPTER 4 MULTIPERSPECTIVITY IN THE HISTORY CLASSROOM: THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE AND METAPHORS

In a case study, we analyzed narratives and metaphors of the Netherlands during World War II (1940-1945) that were used in the classroom. Answers were sought for the following research questions: First, to what extent were the narratives of the Netherlands during World War II presented in a multiperspectival way in the history classroom? Second, what are the features of metaphorical language in the perspectives of these narratives?

The history lessons about the Netherlands during WW II of one history teacher and her class of 22 students (11<sup>th</sup> grade) were investigated. We collected the following data: (a) lesson materials used by the teacher, including the textbook in use, a video clip and an excerpt of an autobiographical novel of a well-known Dutch journalist; (b) student results from a writing task (writing a letter to a Danish student

participating in a fictitious exchange program: “What would you tell him or her about the Netherlands during WW II?”); (c) videotaped recordings of the lessons; and (d) two interviews with the teacher.

In all resources, narrative elements (historical agency, dates and events, geographical scale and dimensions) were analyzed on the presence of multiple perspectives. In addition, we searched for references to historiographical interpretations to determine whether the texts considered different historical interpretations of particular events, persons, or developments. The video recordings of the lessons were used to investigate whether the teacher and/or students introduced perspectives that were not yet present in the lesson materials.

To answer our second research question, we followed the same metaphor identification procedure as in chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 5 MULTIPERSPECTIVITY IN LESSON DESIGNS OF HISTORY TEACHERS

This chapter examined the role of the type of schoolbook text (high or low on multiperspectivity) in the lesson designs of teachers and their considerations for their design. The first research question is: to what extent do teachers include multiple perspectives in their lesson designs based upon a text that includes multiple perspectives compared to a schoolbook history text containing fewer perspectives? Our second question is: what are the considerations of teachers for the lessons they designed?

Eighteen history teachers were asked to individually design two lessons for upper secondary education (havo, 10<sup>th</sup> grade) based upon a provided text about the Dutch Revolt. Participants received either a text low in multiperspectivity or a text with high multiperspectivity. The texts were randomly assigned. These texts were especially written for this study and contained specific features but were otherwise comparable with texts that are part of history textbooks that are in use in upper levels of secondary education. To guide them through the design process the participants were asked to answer some questions. Subsequently, a semistructured interview about their lesson design and their considerations was conducted.

First, the lesson designs were binary coded on whether multiperspectivity occurred in different parts of the lessons: Aims,

Instruction, Additional materials and Learning activities. Second, the types of perspective that appeared in the lesson designs were coded: the perspectives of Agents, Scales, Dimensions, Historiography (historians' perspectives) and Students' perspectives. If the lesson design met three requirements related to aims and instruction, dimensions or scale, historians' and students' perspectives, the lesson design was labeled high on multiperspectivity.

## CHAPTER 6 THE INFLUENCE OF MULTIPERSPECTIVITY IN HISTORY TEXTS ON STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIONS OF A HISTORICAL EVENT

This chapter explores how the degree of multiperspectivity in history textbooks affects students' representation of a historical phenomenon presented in the text. The following research question was answered: which perspectives are present in students' representations when they engage in text processing assignments based upon a schoolbook history text that contains multiple perspectives compared to a schoolbook history text containing fewer perspectives? An experimental study was conducted to answer the research question. In the experimental condition, students were given a text containing multiple perspectives of actors, scales, dimensions and historiography, whereas students in the other condition received a text low in perspectivity. All students (havo, 10<sup>th</sup> grade,  $N = 104$ ) were asked to individually fulfill three text processing assignments – underlining the text, summarizing and making a poster – wherein they were asked to make a representation of the text that was subsequently analyzed. The texts used were the same as in chapter 5. The representations were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed on their presence of perspectivity of actors, aspects of scale, dimensions and historiography.

### POSITION OF THE AUTHOR

A thesis on multiperspectivity cannot do well without making clear my own perspective. Being a history textbook writer and history teacher educator for many years was the inspiration to start my research for this thesis. For me, history is above all a constructed narrative about the past,

in which the study of sources in the context of the time in which they originated is an essential element. As Seixas (2000) stated, history is not only about the best story about the past, or an exercise in disciplined knowledge but also an engagement with postmodern challenges. Such challenges encompass history as narrative, the own positionality of the historian – including my own – limitations of progress and the textuality of sources.

In light of a globalizing world and its societal effects, such as the impact of Covid-19 or of the Black Lives Matter movement in the Netherlands, and of the polarizing effects of fake news, it is essential that in history education a critical engagement of multiple perspectives is present. In this manner, one could do justice to the growing diversity of students and their perspectives on the past. For me, it is in the first place about which narratives are presented, in the second place by whom these narratives are generated and with which societal and political interest and in the third place why these narratives should be perpetuated. Thus, I became intrigued with what kind of representations of the national past are presented in Dutch history textbooks and how textbooks are hampering or stimulating learning and teaching history as an interpretive enterprise from multiple perspectives.