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Klein, S.R.E.

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Preparing to Teach a Slavery Past: History Teachers and Educators as Navigators of Historical Distance

Stephan Klein
Leiden University

Abstract: Using an analytical framework based on the concept of historical distance, this article explores how Dutch history teachers and educators navigate between the past and the present when making curriculum decisions on the sensitive topic of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. Four history teachers and 2 museum educators were selected on the criteria of ethnicity, professional context, and student audience. They were interviewed twice, using open questions and a task-based design directed at 14–15-year-old students of various cultural backgrounds. Two conclusions are drawn: (1) the curriculum decisions of the selected participants can be interpreted as configurations of historical distance, which are the result of interactions between various types of knowledge, values, and beliefs. Some participants make a distinction between their own personal distancing and the curriculum decisions they take, while others do not or are unsure about deciding, and (2) curriculum decisions are difficult to predict. Some teachers and educators have a preference for certain distancing approaches but do not always follow it, depending on the historical sources they are dealing with. The conclusion discusses how research on history teaching can be facilitated by a deeper comprehension of the decisions teachers and educators make as navigators of historical distance.

Keywords: controversial and sensitive topics, history education, slavery, teacher knowledge

The events of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery (TSTS) have generated memories, cultural traditions, and material remains across three continents for more than four centuries. Its tangible and intangible heritage is part of an endless process of reproduction and (re)mediation of meanings

Correspondence should be sent to Stephan Klein, ICLON–Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching, Postbus 905, 2300 AX Leiden, The Netherlands. Email: kleins@iclon.leidenuniv.nl

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and representations (Erll & Rigney, 2009; Eyerman, 2004; Smeulders, 2012). The topic is still one of the most contested in some countries. In the United Kingdom, the abolition of the slave trade was widely commemorated in 2007 with various opinions and opposing perspectives (Smith, Cubitt, Fouseki, & Wilson, 2011). The same is true for the Netherlands, where many remembrance activities took place for the first time in 2013. These changes in what is seen in society as historically significant and the controversies surrounding the interpretation of TSTS also affect teaching, especially when students have very different prior expectations and understandings (Klein, in press-a).

Over the past two decades, TSTS has become a sensitive topic in the Netherlands and is a compulsory subject in the national history curriculum. Before the year 2000, history textbooks usually mentioned TSTS as a sidestory of commercial enterprise during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or dealt with it in the context of U.S. history. In the public mind, the Dutch Golden Age (1600–1700) of commercial success was associated with the Dutch East India Company (VOC), rather than the slave trading West Indies Company (WIC). This “sidestory” character of the topic, both in the public arena and in education, was challenged in the 1990s (Oostindie, 2009; van Stipriaan, 2007), when several minority groups from Suriname (independent from the Netherlands since 1975) and the Dutch Antilles turned to the Dutch government to articulate their concern about the lack of attention paid to TSTS. Their initiative resulted in the establishment of a national slavery monument in Amsterdam in 2002 (van Stipriaan, 2001).

Although TSTS has gradually been accepted as a significant topic in Dutch history since then, public discussions are often emotional and highly morally judgmental, using perpetrator and victim frames of reference. Because this debate is essentially about “forgotten” history, I prefer to call it a “sensitive” historical topic (den Heijer, 2011; Nimako & Willemsen, 2011; Oostindie, 2008, 2011). If this past is connected to modern-day examples of discrimination and racism, however, TSTS could also be described as a controversial public issue, unresolved by public policy and affecting classroom discussions (Camicia, 2008; Hess, 2002). In the Netherlands, the debate revolves around both present significance (what facts and emotions in this topic actually matter?) and interpretation (how are we to create a meaningful narrative?). These questions are reflected in discussions about the content and framing of history textbooks and museum presentations (Van Stipriaan, in press).

TSTS has been part of the Dutch national history curriculum since 2007. This curriculum has been structured into 10 eras with only abstract characteristics. Teachers must address European colonialism in the West, the slave trade, and the emergence of abolitionism (characteristic number 29 in Era 7, 1700–1800), but the curriculum leaves completely open how it should be taught. In primary and lower secondary education, teachers also have to deal with the Canon of the Netherlands, an addition to the general curriculum for primary and lower secondary education.¹ It was developed in 2005–2006 to

support national cohesion by prescribing shared knowledge of 50 key events and issues in Dutch history. The slave trade and slavery is topic 23 and is restricted to the Atlantic world between circa 1637–1863.

There are two important differences between both curricula. First, the additional Canon has an explanatory text about TSTS whereas the official curriculum does not. This distinction is not very important, however, as teachers in the Netherlands are free to choose their content and teaching materials. Second, unlike the Canon, the official curriculum prescribes a critical approach to the past, with historical thinking concepts such as continuity and change (C&CH), authorial subjectivity, contextualization, multiperspectivity, and historical and present significance (van Boxtel & Grever, 2011). There is still plenty of room for choice, however, as there is no specific prescription for how a topic should be taught critically, which means that, especially for the more sensitive topics in the Dutch history curriculum, teachers' and educators' curriculum choices have become an important issue.

In this study, I explore in depth how some Dutch history teachers and educators think about meaningful approaches to TSTS when dealing with its history and heritage. The study focuses on thinking in a pre-teaching situation, in particular on how these teachers perform their gatekeeping role as decision makers, rather than on their more elaborated pedagogical strategies and actual teaching (Thornton, 1991).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Teacher Knowledge

To explain how gatekeeping by teachers works, we need to understand “teacher knowledge,” especially the intersection of various types of knowledge, values, and beliefs (Hammerness et al., 2005; Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006; Shulman, 1986; Verloop, van Driel, & Meijer, 2001). With regard to controversial issues in the present, several studies have emphasized the relationship between teachers' social identities and their curriculum decisions to avoid or confront students, with varying strategies and results when it comes to dialogue about present values and emotions (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Epstein & Shiller, 2005; Hess, 2002, 2005; King, 2009; Oulton, Day, Dillon, & Grace, 2004). Regarding dialogue, however, we should also bear in mind how disciplinary knowledge influences teacher decisions.

There is a distinction between teaching history and addressing its (long-term) consequences into the present and teaching about contemporary issues that have historical causes. Theoretical debates in the discipline of history (Retz, 2015) and recent research on history teachers have indicated that historians, when teaching their subject, may be more aware of certain epistemological challenges when connecting the past and the present than do those who have

been trained in other disciplines (Barton & McCully, 2012; Kello, 2016; Traille, 2007; Zembylas & Kambani, 2012). Expert history teachers not only have integrated knowledge of historical content and knowledge of the historical identities of their students, but they also have a better grasp of disciplinary concepts. For example, they emphasize the otherness of the past as key to teaching history, and they may be more sensitive, therefore, to the pitfalls of presentist thinking by their students (Cunningham, 2007; Grant, 2003; Husbands, 2011; Klein, 2010).

Historical Distancing

To explain this disciplinary view of the past, we turn to the concept of “historical distance.” Historians often use the concept of distance as a metaphor for an imagined relation between the past and the present (den Hollander, Paul, & Peters, 2011). In addition, the term “distancing” (M. Phillips, 2004, 2011) refers to people’s interpretative activity when they try to situate themselves between a then and a now. Distance in this case should be viewed as a continuum with numerous possible combinations and manifestations. According to Grever, de Bruijn, and van Boxtel (2012), distance in history refers to a configuration of both time and engagement. When thinking about past events, people order time in a certain way. The past can be configured as being “closer” to the present than clock time suggests or as being “further removed” when the elapse of time is fully taken into account. In doing so, people simultaneously engage with the past, attributing to it personal feelings and convictions with different degrees of affection, moral commitment, and identification (Grever, 2013). In fact, all thinking about the past and its physical remains will lead to positions on the temporal and engagement dimensions, which together constitute “historical distance.”

According to Zerubavel (2003), shorter distancing is often done by making use of so-called mnemonic techniques of bridging and pasting. The idea of bridging the past and the present relates to thinking about “historical places,” “relics or memorabilia,” and “common ancestors.” A historical place that you can visit at a later point in time can be a powerful tool for imagining the past as being closer to the present. Relics, memorabilia, and objects in general, although they are often displaced from their original context, can provide a similar time-traveller experience because they have also witnessed events in the past and can be touched in the present. The notion of common ancestors produces a bridge between the past and the present because the idea of time-travelling DNA suggests a strong connection between those living in the past and those in the present. The tool of mnemonic pasting also produces shorter distancing, although in a somewhat different way. In mnemonic pasting, a phenomenon of the past is compared to a later phenomenon while eliminating the time that has expired in between, and the past and the present are not bridged,

therefore, but juxtaposed in order to produce a specific meaning, for example by drawing analogies. Historical narratives are often built on these mnemonic techniques of shortening time distance, and they may contain strong engagements when they present objects, places, and other time travellers as being *the* heritage of a particular group.

Longer distancing, in contrast, will be facilitated by tools such as timelines with various periodizations, resulting in a past that is ordered into units with different characteristics. Concepts of the historical discipline, such as thinking about historical perspectives, contextualization, and the need for critical examination of historical sources, are usually associated with longer distancing. This explains the attention being paid to these learning activities in history didactics when “historical thinking” is a teaching goal (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2012; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). Taking a longer distance is often facilitated by a more neutral or aloof type of engagement.

The analytical distinction between longer and shorter distancing, however, should not be seen as coinciding with disciplinary history and the field of heritage, respectively, a distinction influenced by Lowenthal (1998). A whole range of temporal positions and engagements with historical topics can be found in both fields, and many studies today use “heritage” as a dynamic concept, which points to continuous processes of meaning making, contestation, and identity formation, resulting in all sorts of usable pasts for present concerns (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007; Smith, 2006). Professional historians still abide by criteria of rationality and evidence in historical explanations, but they find it increasingly difficult to sustain their position amidst the many competitors who claim a stake in interpreting the past (Black, 2005). Historians, therefore, are reconsidering their role in the “overwhelming plenty and abundance of meaning” (de Groot, 2009, p. 13) in contemporary popular culture and are increasingly interested in the popular quest for heritage and the intersection of history, memory, and identity, also in relation to history education (Jonker, 2012; Rigney & Leerssen, 2000; Tilmans, van Vree, & Winter, 2010). Museums and other heritage institutions, in their turn, also produce various ways of distancing in their presentations (Grever et al., 2012; Klein, in press-b), and many of them are also reconsidering their interpretive role as gatekeepers to open up to the diversity of visitors and users of their collections.

Research on student thinking has revealed the impact of how history is used in the historical culture of societies today. Several studies have shown how students’ ideas about history are shaped by various configurations of historical distancing in family stories, museum exhibitions, and digital media (Epstein, 1998; Grever, Pelzer, & Haydn, 2011; Peck, 2010; R. Phillips, 2002; Seixas, 1993; Smith et al., 2011). The status of a historical topic in a contemporary social context also influences students’ configurations of historical distance (Goldberg, Schwarz, & Porat, 2008). Many scholars, therefore, have claimed that the different present perspectives that students may already have should

be acknowledged and integrated into a sensible way of teaching and learning in schools and museums (Barton, 2009; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Barton & McCully, 2012; Carretero, Asensio, & Rodriguez-Moneo, 2012; Davis, Yeager, & Foster, 2001; Lévesque, 2005, 2008; Marcus, Stoddard, & Woodward, 2012; Stradling, 2003). Recent task-based studies on the relationship between students' cultural backgrounds and their reasoning about the past have confirmed that students' emotional responses are sometimes grounded in their socially constructed identities, which could be good starting points for teachers to devise historical thinking tasks (Halvorsen, Harris, Aponte-Martinez, & Frasier, 2016; Savenije, van Boxtel, & Grever, 2014a, 2014b).

This study, therefore, focuses on how history teachers and educators deal with TSTS from three key areas of teacher knowledge: social identity, disciplinary understanding, and knowledge of what pupils think and feel about TSTS. The research question is: How is historical distance involved in the curriculum decisions made by history teachers and educators on the sensitive topic of TSTS?

METHOD

Analytical Framework

Based on the distinctions made in the theoretical reflections on historical distance, I use "time" and "engagement" in an analytical framework to interpret how teachers think about the curriculum when preparing to teach specific historical topics, in this case TSTS (see Figure 1). The framework is a two-dimensional coordinate system and distinguishes four quadrant areas which constitute certain configurations of time (longer or shorter) and engagement (higher or lower). Configurations of time and engagement always come in many complex varieties and cannot be mathematically measured. The framework is designed for an exploratory study to uncover differences in dealing with the past from a gatekeeper's perspective (i.e., his or her intended curriculum choices), which implies that, in this study, the participants' thinking will be analyzed on the basis of how they plan to construct past–present relations with their students. When they focus on differences or discontinuity between the past and the present and the need for historical contextualization, it will be called longer distancing. When the participants emphasize sameness or continuity, using mnemonic bridging or pasting techniques, the term shorter distancing is used. It is important to notice that the term engagement in this study does not focus on how the participants personally engage with TSTS (although this will play a role as well) but on whether or not they plan to influence or deal with their students' engagements. In the shorter distance areas, engagement focuses on whether or not teachers promote the building of collective identities. In the longer distance areas, engagement focuses on whether

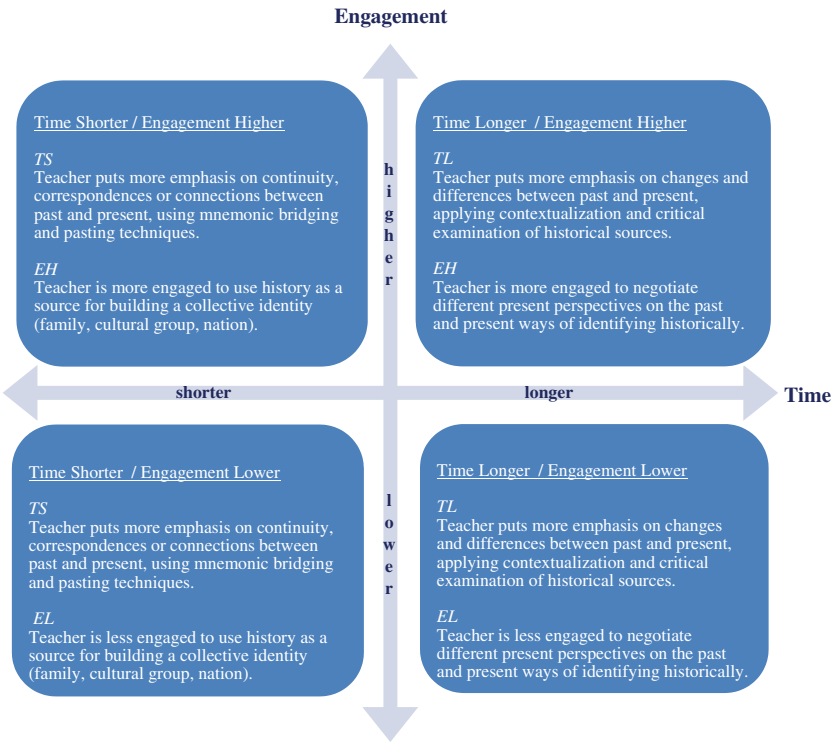


Figure 1. Configurations of Historical Distance in History Teaching

or not teachers plan to negotiate different present perspectives on the past and different ways of identifying historically.

Participants

In the context of this exploratory study, I selected a small number of participants (six). Because thinking about curriculum decision-making may be influenced by uncertainty about group management, the participants had to have at least 5 years of teaching experience. To study the varieties of historical distancing from a teacher knowledge perspective, I used the selection criteria of ethnicity, professional context, and student audience. The participants formed a small but heterogeneous group, which provided for a qualitative in-depth analysis of gatekeepers’ considerations.

The first criterion was ethnicity. I use this term rather than “social identity” as the construction of the participants’ identities, in particular their historical identity in relation to TSTS, was part of the research question. The selection

was based on the idea that some participants needed to have “Black” Caribbean origins, although this group represents a small population in educational settings in the Netherlands. One teacher and one museum educator with this background accepted the invitation to participate, both of whom were born in Suriname but had lived in the Netherlands for more than three decades. The other four participants, one educator and three teachers, were “White” and had been born in the Netherlands.

With regard to the second criterion, I distinguished between a school context and a museum context because these may have different ways of working when it comes to making sense of the past. For example, history teachers in the Netherlands have to adopt an approach that stimulates historical thinking. Educators in museums and other heritage institutions are not bound by those regulations but often want to complement what students learn in the classroom. The group of participants represented two museums (one participant each) and two schools (two participants each). One museum had 19th-century roots (Leiden) with its own collection and with a mission that was broader than presenting TSTS. The other was a 21st century museum (Amsterdam) without a collection of its own and with a mission devoted to remembering TSTS. Both museums offered educational projects on TSTS, and I invited the educator most directly involved with TSTS from each museum for interviewing. These two museum educators happened to have different educational degrees in subjects other than history. From each school, I invited one teacher with a university degree in history (MA) and another one with a bachelor’s or baccalaureus degree in history (Bc.). Dutch schools always have teachers with different levels of education, which may influence their thinking about a curriculum.

The third criterion, student audience, applied to the school context more than the museum context. Museums always have a wide variety of students coming in from different schools. The varieties of student audiences in schools in the Netherlands, however, may also be significant, making it a selection criterion. The teacher participants worked in schools with mixed student populations, one in Amsterdam and one in Rotterdam, both of which are immigrant cities that share a past connection with Dutch colonialism and the slave trade. Students with Caribbean backgrounds (Suriname and the Dutch Antilles) were a major demographic group in the Amsterdam school, whereas this group was only a minority in the Rotterdam school. [Table 1](#) provides a summary of the participants’ information.

Instruments

I designed two instruments for conducting separate semi-structured interviews. The first instrument had open questions, aiming to stimulate the participants to talk in a self-reflective way and relating to the three important areas of teacher knowledge when dealing with sensitive issues (see Appendix A):

Table 1. Personal Characteristics of the Participants

	Participants ^a					
	Lilian	Rachel	Falko	William	Joseph	Harmen
Profession (gender) and education	Educator 1 (f), Anthropology MA	Educator 2 (f), Culture & Management Bc.	Teacher 1 (m), History MA	Teacher 2 (m), History & Geography Bc	Teacher 3 (m), History MA	Teacher 4 (m), History & Geography Bc
Country of birth	Suriname	Netherlands	Netherlands	Suriname	Netherlands	Netherlands
Professional context	Museum 1 Amsterdam	Museum 2 Leiden	School 1 Amsterdam	School 1 Amsterdam	School 2 Rotterdam	School 2 Rotterdam
Student audience	multicultural	multicultural	multicultural (Caribbean majority)	multicultural (Caribbean majority)	multicultural (Caribbean minority)	multicultural (Caribbean minority)

^aParticipant names are fictitious.

- *social identity*: in this case, the participants' personal relationship with the topic of TSTS
- *disciplinary knowledge*: the participants' concept of heritage in relation to history education on a disciplinary basis (past–present relations)
- *knowledge of their students*: the participants' goals when teaching TSTS to 14–15-year-old students with different cultural backgrounds, and the participants' knowledge of what their students know about TSTS and how they feel about it.

The second instrument, in contrast, was designed as a more ecologically valid experiment. The participants were asked to make decisions about 25 items to be used in a learning exhibition about TSTS (see Appendix B). They were to bear in mind students with different cultural backgrounds and were to think of the exhibition without considering spatial limits or financial constraints. Museum educators are, of course, more familiar with the context of exhibition making, but history teachers often visit them and can imagine their way of working, whereas museum educators rarely have much classroom teaching experience. The idea behind this interview was not to research ideas about a whole exhibition but, more modestly, to study their reasoning when thinking about specific examples in a realistic context. This approach is more open than when certain items are grouped in advance, and it allows participants to weigh items of their choice separately rather than being forced to use a researcher's categories.

The 25 items were selected to prompt a variety of responses concerning historical distancing in the dimensions of time and engagement. They varied from 18th–20th century illustrations and photos of buildings, monuments, objects, and historical actors, to written sources, a scene from a Hollywood movie, and a reggae clip from YouTube. As such, they differed in the representation of certain aspects of TSTS, in the moral messages included, or in the historical locations they refer to. The selection contained the following categories:

- Conditions of slavery: (Audio-) Visual representations of slaves as either unfree, resistant, having a life of their own, or as brutally punished.
- Places: Items referring to the three continents involved. Some were more tied to the Dutch Republic or to peoples in Africa (Ghana, Benin). Others inhabited the Atlantic space as a contact zone.
- Historical perspectives: A written text from a perpetrator perspective (a WIC administrator) and one from a victim perspective (an ex-slave and abolitionist).
- Present perspectives: Items that morally judged the Dutch today for their slavery past or criticized moral judgments from Caribbean memory cultures as a modern invention of trauma. Some items referred to

(the memory of) slavery in different geographical contexts (Netherlands, United States, South Africa).

Interviews

The items were shown in PowerPoint, and every slide contained a short description of the nature of the source, its date, and a reference or its place of origin. This design was piloted with one teacher who was not one of the participants to find out whether the information was accurate enough to make reasoning about curriculum choices possible. The pilot showed that, although small changes needed to be made in the descriptions of some slides, the slides worked well as stimuli for an interview. The participants had to evaluate the slides one by one using a 5-point scale that ranged from “not usable at all” to “very appropriate.” This scale was only used as an incentive to initiate talk about choices or doubts. The participants’ answers usually led to follow-up questions, which invited them to elaborate on their reasoning or explain the knowledge that guided their choices.

The interviews were conducted at the participants’ schools and museums between March and June 2010, with at least a week between the first interview and the second. They were all audiotaped by me and subsequently transcribed by an assistant. Both types of interviews lasted about 1 hour each, on average.

Data Analysis

After reading all interviews several times to get acquainted with the data, I started analyzing the first semi-structured interview of every participant. I wrote profiles of every participant based on what they had said about their historical identity concerning this topic, their disciplinary understanding, and their student knowledge in combination with their ideas about how to approach TSTS in education. These descriptions based on Interview 1 only dealt with the participants’ self-perceptions of these issues. Some of these data are presented in the section which deals with the participants’ historical identities in relation to TSTS. Other data of the first interview are integrated in the section which presents themes from the second interview.

The data of the second interview were different because the participants here considered specific items related to slavery for education. I started my analysis with a more interpretively grounded approach (Charmaz, 2014). In coding the data, I focused on the participants’ prevailing arguments for either using or not using an item. When participants decided not to use an item, I coded for their specific reasons. Many items were considered useful, however, which resulted in four main categories of codes. Very often, items were evaluated as examples or illustrations of past events and developments, and these

were coded as “narrative examples.” Some items triggered considerations of using them critically in a historical context. Some participants thought about stimulating students to ask questions about the kind of items they were, what historical perspectives they showed, or how they provided evidence for changes in history. These were coded as “historical thinking.” Items that were seen as important for certain or all students today because they contained important lessons for the present were coded as “present significance.” A fourth main category was labeled “Other.” Table 2 provides further explanation of the codes used in this study.

The coding process was refined in collaboration with two colleague researchers involved in history and heritage education. A first comparison of coding was done with one of them for ten slides, selected because these represented different categories (place, voice, etc.) and were difficult to interpret in the coding process. This comparison revealed a fine distinction in how the participants evaluated the emotional characteristics of some items. As a result, I subcoded separately for “Source Analysis” (SA—point of view) and “historical perspective” (HP). I used the term “point of view” in the category SA when answers referred to the possibility of analyzing bias or subjectivity in textual, visual, or three-dimensional sources, which differs from “historical perspective,” as this category refers to a more immediate recognition or emotional experience of how conditions must have been for certain people in the past.

A second comparison with another colleague researcher was done for three slides because these evoked rich answers by the participants. This analysis revealed that the “narrative example” code needed to be subcoded because the data showed differences in what an item was supposed to be an example of. For example, in the following transcript, teacher Falko thinks about what to do with item 1 (slaves and ship):

- Teacher: Interesting. I'll give it a 4 because I think we get a very good image of how slaves were treated by a master, so this is a good image, which I can use.
- Interviewer: Do you have a certain question for this item, of how to use it?
- Teacher: Well, what I find very important is that this is about traveling to Surinam, to the inner part of Guyana. So, they have just arrived in the country, and it's a very beautiful image to start with. You could ask questions like “What do you see,” “What is happening precisely?” and you could later elaborate that because this gives the essence of what slavery is.

This item was first coded as “narrative example” and was then subcoded as “imaginative” because the item was evaluated by the teacher as a more literal illustration of an essential part of TSTS and needed to be distinguished from items that were symbolic, canonical, or only represented a secondary aspect of TSTS. Tables 3 and 4 provide examples of this analysis. In the next step, the results of the coding for both interviews with all participants were compared

Table 2. Explanation of Codes

Intended use of item	
I. WOULD USE ITEM	II. WOULD NOT USE ITEM
<i>Narrative example</i>	
NarExpl—imaginative: The item illustrates a key element in the TSTS narrative (such as a person, an object, an event, a phenomenon)	0 [no NarExpl]: would not use item, because I cannot establish a connection to TSTS-narrative
NarExpl—symbolic: the item has a symbolic value in the TSTS-narrative	0 [= inadequate]: would not use item because it does not represent the past adequately
NarExpl—canonical: the item has an important status for TSTS	0 [= NoEV]: would not use item because it does not have extra value
NarExpl—sec: the item illustrates a secondary element of the TSTS-narrative	0 [= MJ]: would not use item, because it is morally judging
<i>Historical thinking</i>	0 [for Mem-Car]: would not use item for pupils with Caribbean background
C&Ch: continuity and change (use item for distinguishing between)	0 [for Mem-O]: would not use item for pupils with other background than mentioned
SA: source analysis (use item for asking questions about) [such as: point of view and context, reliability, representativeness)	0 [in classroom]: would not use item in classroom
HP- . . . : historical perspective of . . . (use item for recognizing or experiencing a)	0 [in museum]: would not use item in museum
<i>Present significance</i>	?: not sure about value of item
PS-Uns: students [unspecified] (use item because relevant for)	III. PITFALLS/POINTS OF ATTENTION
PS-All: all students (use item because relevant for)	CMC!: conflicting memory cultures (when using item be careful of)
PS-Dut: students with Dutch background (use item because relevant for)	PS!: promote stereotypes (when using item be careful not to)
PS-Car: students with Caribbean background (use item because relevant for)	REL! overrelativation (when using item be careful of) . . . (specific description)
<i>Other</i>	
MJ ^a : moral judgment (use item for stimulating)	
CS: change stereotypes (use item for helping pupils to)	

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Intended use of item
ESTH: esthetic value (use item for its)
. . . [in classroom]: would use item for
this purpose in the classroom
? / . . . : unsure, but would use item

^aMJ can mean teaching certain values for the present, without regard for historical change. Therefore MJ is placed here in the category “Other.” MJ, however, is also seen as an element of historical thinking, when a judgment is reached after contextualization and in full awareness of the changing nature of values. This is the kind of MJ that occasionally was found in this research, and the code MJ in the analysis is then combined with C&CH or SA.

and refined in an iterative process of interpretation, which revealed not only some important consistencies in the participants’ reasoning between Interviews 1 and 2, but also that the participants were sometimes driven by other knowledge and considerations in Interview 2 than came up in Interview 1. Interview 2, for example, more explicitly revealed some personal beliefs. In addition, though participants may have shared the same codes for reaching a decision on an item in Interview 2, the underlying considerations often differed in their complexity. I included these differences in teacher knowledge in my explanation of how the participants’ decisions could be positioned in the Time and Engagement framework. In the presentation of the findings, I will mention explicitly whether a decision on an item was interpreted as shorter or longer distancing (TS or TL) and lower or higher engagement (LE or HE). Sometimes, participants were unsure or could not come up with a clear approach, which will be called “unspecified.”

FINDINGS

Participants’ Historical Identities and TSTS (Interview 1)

In this section, I present information based on the first question (and follow-up questions) of Interview 1, because this will help readers to better understand the participants’ decisions in Interview 2. The first question of Interview 1 tried to uncover how the participants were historically connected to the topic of TSTS.

Falko and William (school 1, Amsterdam). Falko identified himself as Frisian first and Dutch second. Friesland is a province in the north of the Netherlands and has its own language and traditions, but as a minority culture

Table 3. Analysis Item 1

Item 1—Slaves and ship		Intended use of item		Pitfalls/Points of interest
		Yes	No	
		Category		
Teacher	Narrative example	Historical thinking	Memory significance	Other
Lilian	<i>Imaginative:</i> – clothing – inequality			
Rachel	<i>Imaginative:</i> – transport from ship			
Falko	<i>Imaginative:</i> – inequality			
William	<i>Imaginative:</i> – inequality <i>Iconic:</i> – from account of John Stedman			0 [= inadequate] – no men on picture – no chains – unclear slaves are leaving a ship
Joseph				
Harmen	<i>Imaginative:</i> – inequality			

Table 4. Analysis Item 19

Item 19 National slavery monument	Intended use of item		Pitfalls/Points of interest	
	Yes	No		
	Category			
Teacher	Narrative example	Historical thinking	Memory significance	Other
Lilian Rachel	<i>Symbolic</i> – for connecting past-present		PS-Uns PS-Uns	ESTH
Falko William	<i>Symbolic:</i> – for shared past and common future		PS-Uns	0 [= MJ]
Joseph	<i>Symbolic:</i> – for abolition of slavery			
Harmen	<i>Symbolic</i> – for connecting past-present		PS-All	



it accommodates easily to Dutch national culture. Falko understood the importance of TSTS for his diverse student population (with many ties to Suriname and the Dutch Antilles) based on long teaching experience. He was willing to adapt his teaching to the sensitivity of the topic, but on his own conditions. In the interview, Falko displayed a “real aversion” to being morally judged as a White teacher. If he were asked, he would not want to walk a slavery heritage trail with his students in the inner city of Amsterdam because strolling along every house where a slave trader lived would have given him a discomforting feeling. His feelings had become more explicit in discussions with teacher William from Suriname at his current school, who, as he explained, “feels that we as Whites should accept continuous responsibility for the slave trade.”

Teacher William, Falko’s colleague, described himself as Surinamese by culture, though Dutch by passport. For the first interview, William spontaneously brought with him archival records, family photos, a genealogical tree, and a 19th century map of plantations in Suriname. Using these private and public material objects, he reconstructed his ancestral line back to 1863. The archival records showed when his forefather was emancipated by the owners of a Surinamese plantation and also what Dutch surname he received, which was the name William was still carrying. William talked about history and culture in terms of national reconciliation. He emphasized that the VOC and WIC were part of “our cultural heritage,” that “we” shared a past, and that “we” had to think about how to build a common future.

William knew he differed from Falko, who, according to him, was one of those who say “not everyone has a slavery past.” He showed understanding for this position of “White teachers in front of Black students” but also signaled a lack of interest in TSTS in comparison with the overwhelming attention that was devoted to the Holocaust. He wanted more attention to be paid to TSTS and to emancipate it from curricular suppression by other topics. He regretted that, as a school, they still had not done the Amsterdam slavery heritage trail with their classrooms.

Both teachers acknowledged the importance of TSTS for teaching and were experienced teachers of the topic, but their historical identification with TSTS was quite different, as this past was much closer to the present for William than for Falko.

Joseph and Harmen (school 2, Rotterdam). Joseph was born in the Netherlands and did not feel any kind of connection with TSTS. His answer was short and decisive in this respect. Joseph was also not very familiar with teaching the topic, and he said he had little knowledge of it. However, he did not show signs of objecting to teaching it.

Harmen was also a native, Dutch teacher, but unlike Joseph he considered himself explicitly to be an inheritor of the TSTS past. He accepted this inheritance, however, as a responsible Dutch citizen, not as an individual. It was not

a personal burden for him. Harmen thought TSTS was important and he had considerable experience teaching the topic.

As citizens of a country with a slavery past, Joseph and Harmen both accepted responsibility for teaching TSTS, but Harmen's teacher knowledge in this case was much deeper than Joseph's, and he felt more responsibility and enthusiasm for teaching the topic.

Lilian and Rachel (museum educators). Lilian was born in Suriname. She emphasized that she had not felt any particular relationship with the slavery past for very long: "I'm not ashamed to say that it didn't do anything to me [before 2008], and the link with slavery simply wasn't there." Her family's motto was to "look ahead" and make something of your life. The history of slavery had never been a topic of discussion. She did not know why but mentioned reluctance and feelings of shame that she had noticed with certain Surinamese and Antillean families. Since 2008, when she started working at the museum, she had delved into the topic and also discovered important missing links in her genealogy. She knew she was the child of a Black father and a White mother in Suriname, but it turned out that she also had ancestors of mixed color earlier on. Very important for Lilian was her trip back to Suriname after 40 years, where she met family members and obtained a real sense of place. Since then, she felt she had reconnected with the slavery past. Her engagement with the topic had changed from upholding the family motto to an emotional interest in her personal slavery past.

Unlike Lilian, Rachel did not have any family connection with the Caribbean. She identified herself historically as "plain Dutch." She was born in the eastern part of the Netherlands, which has no direct connection with the North Sea. She had developed a certain interest in Suriname, though, because she worked there as a volunteer in a museum for 6 months.

For Lilian, this past was becoming closer to the present than for Rachel, but both thought TSTS was an important topic, while neither of them was very experienced in teaching it in a museum or classroom context.

TSTS: Curriculum Decisions (Interview 2)

The assignment for Interview 2 was very open. The participants were free to think about all kinds of possibilities for an exhibition about TSTS. Sometimes, the four history teachers struggled a little at the beginning because they had to think outside the context in which they usually operated. While answering, they often also made comments on what they would do with the items in the classroom, rather than in a museum. In general, however, they did not seem hindered by this task.

All participants valued many items as being examples of a larger historical narrative. These items were thought to help learning by visually anchoring

storylines (code: narrative example—imaginative). Although the participants shared this associative thinking strategy, their evaluation of the 25 items obviously differed. Sometimes the participants' decisions in Interview 2 seemed to comply with what they had said during the first interview. In many other instances, however, their answers were less straightforward and proved to be based on more complex considerations specific to the items that were presented. They showed more variation in historical distancing than could be determined from the more self-reflective answers they gave during the first interview. Below, I will analyze these variations and try to explain why they occurred. To do so, I have selected three clusters of items and one separate item which were most revealing in this respect: images of slavery, the middle passage depicted in the movie *Amistad*, historical perspectives, and items of remembrance.

Images of slavery (items 1–4). The participants' considerations on items 1–4 are an interesting introduction into how personal historical distancing can affect curriculum decisions. Items 1, 2, and 4 were well-known pictures from an 18th century critical narrative by the Scot John Stedman, who was a soldier in service of the Dutch forces in Suriname. Item 3 came from a 19th century account by the Frenchman P. J. Benoit. These four items were almost unanimously considered to be illustrative for the various conditions of slavery (unfree, resistant, having a life of their own, and severe punishment). The four history teachers, however, either had more explicit arguments for their choices or considered a different approach.

William emphasized that items 1 and 4 should be in an exhibition *because* they were from Stedman, and “if this is unknown to students, then they should learn what his role was and what he did in Surinam.” This means that Stedman's account of Dutch brutalities in Suriname had become a canonical text for William. His decision to use illustrations from Stedman seemed interconnected with the victim perspective he had adopted in the first interview. On that occasion, he told that his goals for TSTS were first and foremost to empathize with the victims and to learn lessons from the wrongs of the past. You should always “scratch your conscience,” he said, and “guard norms and values,” so as “not to make the same mistakes.” William wanted to learn directly from the past and talk about the horror as an emancipatory strategy to infuse Dutch collective memory with a memory of TSTS in the service of democracy. Apparently, Stedman's story fitted very well into this purpose (TS–EH).

When Harmen took on item 2 (resistance by maroons), he made it clear that the picture was appropriate for Surinamese students, who would find it fascinating to discover that slaves resisted. He would use the item because these students could build some identity on this if they wanted:

If only for the fact that there was resistance against slavery, this can be a source of pride for some children, for example those with creole backgrounds. I don't find it necessary to bring this up very explicitly, but I do think that there should be room for having this feeling.

Harmen's ambition apparently included offering students explicit opportunities for identity building themselves (TS-EH). Nevertheless, he also kept inviting them to develop "a balanced view" (TL-EH).

In Interview 1, Falko, like Harmen, had said it was important for him as a teacher to mediate between students' different memorial needs. However, in the particular case of item 2, he did not think like Harmen. Falko seriously doubted whether the maroons were part of the main story. He had practical concerns about the length of the exhibition, and the topic of slaves fighting back from the jungle did not seem significant enough from his longer-distance (White) perspective (TL-EL).

Joseph, who was inexperienced with the topic, decided only against using item 1 (picture of slaves and ship). He had three reasons: the picture did not show Black men (only women), there were no chains to be seen, and according to him it was unclear that those depicted were leaving a ship. Joseph's decision was based on an internal and personal list of criteria for narrative clarity. Interestingly, however, Joseph was also the only one for whom item 4 (picture of a hanging slave) triggered SA questions. He distanced longer and pondered about subjectivity and the picture's "representativeness for daily life" in comparison with the more peaceful depiction in item 3 (picture of plantation). For item 4, he wanted his students to only ask critical questions about the source in relation to its historical context (TL-EL).

The Middle Passage according to the movie Amistad (item 15). When the participants switched to a more present audiovisual depiction of the conditions of slavery, they had very different considerations. The scene of the middle passage from Africa to America as represented by Steven Spielberg in the movie *Amistad* was well known to all participants. Their reactions are a good example of the difficulty of understanding curriculum decisions.

Harmen dismissed the *Amistad* scene as useful because it was an obstacle to arriving at a balanced view. This was due to the "compression of suffering" and the musical dramatization of the scene. He felt particular concerns about the episode where slaves, chained to each other, were thrown overboard: "So what will stick in their minds. . . well I know, that are those, those people in chains who disappear into the deep ocean." Having seen *Amistad's* representation of the middle passage, Harmen feared students would not be able to switch to a position of longer distance where harder evidence could be used to put things into a historical perspective (TL-EH). *Amistad's* representation of

the middle passage suggested a past that was too close to be able to distance yourself from.

William also recognized that the film was a dramatization and contained elements that were historically incorrect, but he still found it very useful. In line with the first interview, he valued the film as a representation of a humanitarian drama and compared it with the Holocaust and modern forms of slavery. By mentally merging these phenomena, he configured the time distance of TSTS to be closer to the present and infused it with the canonical importance of the Holocaust in Western historical culture today (TS–EH). At the same time, he distanced longer by remarking about TSTS that “these wrongs still occur, *perhaps in another shape*, somewhere on the globe.”

Joseph took another angle. He would use the *Amistad* scene in the classroom as a tool for his students to recognize or experience what the middle passage was like. Joseph phrased his pedagogy not so much from a slave perspective, but mainly from the perspective of the slavetraders (Historical thinking: HP–slave trader). He planned to let students take notes

of what they have seen in short concerning the treatment of slaves, the life conditions aboard the ship, and it ends very nicely with the arrival of the surviving slaves, so they did not die; they did not commit suicide and were not killed. Then the slaves were cleaned up in order to sell them on the market for a good price.

Joseph did not plan to engage in a debate about possible differences of feeling but reasoned practically: the scene of the middle passage would fit nicely into the middle of a lesson dealing with the whole triangle. Here we encounter the triangle of slave trade as a narrative template, which also came up during the first interview. On that occasion, Joseph had made it clear that TSTS was actually not a separate topic for him, but rather a side narrative of the trade and industry of the Dutch Golden Age. Within that context, treatment of the topic was structured around the narrative template of the triangular trade. This template places the Dutch Republic, where the ships departed and came home, at the story’s center. Joseph said at that time that he wanted to pay attention to multiple group perspectives in TSTS, but for him the topic had no continuation into the present: It ended with the decline of the WIC at the end of the 18th century. It was this template that shaped his thinking about a lesson plan (TL–EL).

When Joseph was stimulated to also think about an exhibition, his reasoning moved upwards on the engagement level: He would place the scene at the end of a (supposedly) chronological narrative and show it as an audio-visual source that needed to be understood in a late 20th century context with changed opinions about slavery. It remained unclear how much student exchange Joseph

would like to have in this case, but planning this approach certainly allowed for a higher engagement from a historical distance (TL–EH).

The other three participants were also appreciative of the *Amistad* scene, although they showed different emotions when deliberating its use. Falko, who showed an aversion of being morally judged during the first interview, acknowledged the power of the scene “to convey emotions” but left it at that (TS–EL). It was unclear whether he kept aloof on this issue, as I had not pushed him in this case by asking a follow-up question.

Lilian and Rachel had similar ways of reasoning. Lilian said: “I really feel rage inside.” She would use the scene to show what it was like on a slave ship without mentioning a specific approach (unspecified). Rachel reacted somewhat emotionally to the scene and confessed: “it already shocks me the instant I see such a baby.” She suggested that some more editing needed to be done because the past came too close, but she was not sure what goals could be accomplished (unspecified). Both Lilian and Rachel felt uncomfortable with the *Amistad* scene, but it was difficult to determine whether this was due to the gender aspect of the scene (women and children), historical identification (in Lilian’s case), or both. The fact that neither of them could come up with a clear teaching goal appears to be related to their lack of disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of what students think and feel. Neither Lilian nor Rachel were historians by training, and neither of them were able to give examples of specific student reactions to TSTS relating to their cultural background during the first interview. Lilian, in fact, disclosed that she did not see students as culturally diverse learners. She thought that children were universal when it came to learning.

Historical perspectives (items 12–13). In the second interview, Falko and Harmen displayed more willingness or ability than the others to reason from different historical perspectives and to adapt to students’ identities at the same time, which was in line with what they said in the first interview about history as a critical discipline and how issues of heritage and their students’ historical identities were involved in learning. Falko emphasized, for example, that it was his ultimate goal to make students think more historically. Students should not stick to “Black and White” presentisms but learn to acknowledge that people’s behavior in the past was often driven by different values. Harmen, likewise, had defined heritage as something that was accepted by a group as belonging to a shared past and understood heritage as a dynamic concept that involved change and multiple perspectives in the past and the present. Harmen strongly felt that teachers should not expect students with totally different cultural backgrounds automatically to accept a dominant historical narrative.

These views drove their reasoning when they were dealing with 18th century textual sources from the perspective of a slave and a slave trader (items 12 and 13). Both Falko and Harmen quickly decided to use SA questions to let students find out from which particular perspective these sources were written

(code Historical thinking—SA). According to Harmen: “What has to be clear is that, from both perspectives, it is not unlogical what they tell, and that it is in his (i.e., the slave trader’s) interest to downplay this.” This type of response was almost second nature to both of them, which Harmen acknowledged by saying that these sources were typical classroom material, without mentioning whether this would give opportunities to engage in a debate about present perspectives (TL—unspecified). Because of the textual nature of the sources, both were hesitant to include such items in an exhibition.

The other participants did not come up with a pedagogy of longer distancing and critical analysis in this case. They would use these items as a narrative example. Lilian and Rachel, who were not trained historians, remained the most indecisive as they were much more puzzled by the account of the slave trader (item 13), who did indeed emphasize the complicity of African traders but also displayed some empathy with the slaves (unspecified).

Items of remembrance (items 19 and 25). The national slavery monument (item 19) and the reggae clip (item 25) were concerned with memory today. Falko and William stood out most here.

The national slavery monument in Amsterdam represents a symbolic linear narrative in three parts: slaves in chains are in the background, a slave walks toward freedom through an arch in the middle, and a front figure stretches her arms widely, thus forming the bow of a ship. William had already mentioned the monument in the first interview as a site he had visited many times with his students. He still valued the symbolism of the monument, of people preparing for a common future, despite a shared past of slavery and colonialism. For him, the monument was a real site of remembrance where the past and the present needed to be connected. A photo could be used to prepare students for living together as Dutch citizens (TS—EH). For Falko, however, the monument was “a sign of political correctness.” Falko showed the same aversion to emotionalizing the topic and to forcing it upon the White population as he did at other moments during the interviews. Although he liked to exchange views on TSTS, he clearly set limits to where he wanted to go. For him, the monument was confrontational and morally judging in a way he could not accept. He was the only participant who would not use the monument as a tool for learning.

The reggae clip morally judged the Dutch explicitly, which provoked the same differences between Falko and William. The clip was performed by a creole Surinamese artist and a choir of mixed descent. It claimed that the Dutch had a slavery past which they had suppressed for three centuries, leaving the descendants of the slaves alone with their trauma. The Dutch, therefore, needed to mourn. Falko explained that this message went too far, as there were so many people, he said, “who have nothing to do with slavery in terms of family.” He then forgot about the exhibition and distinguished between classroom contexts: He would like to use the clip as “an interpretation of history” in a classroom

in Friesland where hardly any members of the Caribbean community live (TL–HE). The clip might be valuable there because it taught that you can look at history from different perspectives. In his Amsterdam classroom, Falko would not use the item at all because, if he did, “then it is not an interpretation anymore.” He expected that many of his students “will immediately, ha ha, join the choir [of the clip].”

William, on the other hand, capitalized on the shorter distancing techniques of the clip, referring to the Holocaust again and saying that slavery “only ended less than 200 years ago.” Reasoning from a more analytical point of view, he then criticized a particular textual passage in the clip that mentioned Piet Hein, a naval commander of the WIC, as being involved in the slave trade. He would skip this passage because he knew it was historically incorrect.

Falko and William navigated differently on the time dimension, and then were both engaging high. For Falko, the monument and the clip could only be used as learning material for negotiating present meanings when a longer distancing approach was possible (TL–EH). William, on the other hand, valued the monument and the clip precisely for their shorter distancing possibilities. For him, they represented a true message about the moral continuity between the past, the present, and the future, despite some minor historical inaccuracies. He interpreted these items of remembrance as tools to build a new national historical narrative in which TSTS was fully integrated without controversy (TS–EH).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This article argues that curriculum decisions about the topic of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery (TSTS) can be interpreted as configurations of time and engagement or historical distance. The findings of two interviews with six participants point to the complexity of how historical distancing is produced in relation to a curriculum topic in two ways.

First, the distancing approaches that were chosen by the participants in the task-based interview were not the product of one specific variable (ethnicity, professional context, or student audience) but emerged out of the complex interactions between their self-constructed historical identities, their historical content knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, knowledge of their students, and their practical concerns.

Teachers Falko and Harmen were White history teachers teaching multicultural classrooms. They often combined longer distancing approaches with higher engagement. Both teachers emphasized discontinuity in time and the need for students to critically analyze historical sources. However, they also recognized the importance of providing students of various backgrounds with the means to engage with TSTS in their own ways, as long as these students would not indulge in feelings of shame or blame. Falko and Harmen gave their students room to navigate historical distance in shorter ways, although within

the limits of reasoned moral judgment (MJ). What is interesting with both these teachers is that they explicitly distinguished between their personal historical distancing as White men and what they perceived to be the different needs of their students. In relation to the other participants, Falko and Harmen's preferred approach in history teaching appeared to be related to their stronger grasp of disciplinary thinking from different perspectives, their deeper content knowledge, and their broader knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of their own students as learners of TSTS.

The other participants did not come up with negotiating approaches, although for different reasons. White history teacher Joseph favored longer distancing and lower engagement approaches and acknowledged that he lacked more recent content knowledge of TSTS. His thinking was strongly influenced by an older Eurocentric narrative template of a trading triangle, which had ended at the end of the eighteenth century. TSTS was something of the past for him. This way of thinking, however, surfaced more strongly when confronted with a classroom context than with a museum context.

William's thinking (Surinamese background) was strongly influenced by a "Holocaust" frame of reference. This is a mnemonic pasting technique which creates continuity between two historical phenomena (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 40), in this case to support William's emancipatory mission of raising the importance of TSTS in the curriculum. William combined shorter distancing with higher engagement. He pointed to the continuity of violence against humanity and focused on building up a new, more acceptable historical narrative for his students to identify with rather than on helping them to cope with a past from various perspectives.

Educators Lilian and Rachel were the least specific in their thinking about how to approach TSTS. They often spoke in general terms about raising awareness, which appeared to be related to the fact that they both lacked deeper content knowledge and knowledge of disciplinary concepts and students' backgrounds. They were included in this study for their educational role in museums as other contexts of negotiation. As it turned out, not being historians nor having teacher qualifications appeared to be more important factors in their reasoning than the museum context in which they worked.

Second, when history teachers talk in general about approaches for dealing with sensitive issues, they display a certain preference which confirms other research on history teachers and their choices, either on a general level of thinking (Kello, 2016; Kitson & McCully, 2005) or, on a deeper level, when tied to specific sources (Klein, 2010; Marcus, Levine, & Grenier, 2012; Stoddard, 2010). With respect to this deeper level, it is important to emphasize that, despite their preferences, the participants were not consistent in their approaches. The items in Interview 2 triggered various configurations of time and engagement, related to the specific textual or visual characteristics of the item, which confirms research by Gottlieb and Wineburg (2012) demonstrating that people may switch epistemically when distancing depending on the context or the specific sources they are dealing with.

This study could be valuable for educating history teachers and educators, in particular when they have to deal with topics that intersect with issues of memory and their students' cultural backgrounds. Educational programs that have been developed to train teachers to be more sensitive to classroom diversity often result only in minor changes in pedagogical thinking, or their results prove to be short lived, even if the program includes encounters with students from various backgrounds (Harris & Haydn, 2006; Virta, 2009). This study supports other research claiming that educating and supporting history teachers in their professional development may benefit when critical reflection on curriculum choices is enriched by addressing more deeply their own insecurities and (in-)sensibilities toward sensitive topics and student audiences (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hawkey & Prior, 2011; King, 2009; Zembylas & Kambani, 2012). The results of this study point to the importance of simultaneously addressing teachers' own historical identities, their content knowledge of various perspectives on topics in the past and the present, and their social role in a democracy. This process may result in a phase of confusion at first (Harris & Clark, 2011) but could be a key factor in helping teachers prepare for the real questions and emotions that may come up in diverse classrooms. So far, historical content and teacher training in university curricula in the Netherlands have been separate forms of education, but if learning to think as a historian and learning to act as a teacher could be combined, in particular on controversial and sensitive topics, there is a lot to be gained.

This observation is important, as the results also suggest that if and how history teachers address diversity in the classroom could be related to conceptualizations of the present in the historical discipline itself. Professional historians are reluctant to accept their role as negotiators of social values (Rigney & Leerssen, 2000) and have only recently emphasized the need for "reflexive presentism" in history education (Jonker, 2012; Wils & Verschaffel, 2012). Teachers Falko and Harmen (in this study) were thinking along this line, but teachers Joseph and William were not and seemed reluctant to deliberately plan exchanges on present values embedded in historical interpretations, although for different reasons. William wanted to change the present by providing a new collective history, whereas Joseph abided by the older claim that history is not about the present and, hence, stayed away from "heritage" issues and the ethical dimension of history (Seixas & Morton, 2012). The museum educators also wanted to change the present, though with less developed ideas of how to accomplish this in education.

These differences in how to establish meaningful relations between the past and the present may be a reflection of the theoretical state of history as a discipline. It also begs the question whether there could be different ways of working between history as a discipline and social studies, into which history may be incorporated. The first is "founded" on the awareness of time and focuses on the past as a separate field of study, with the present as a new historical time where the often unforeseen consequences of past actions unfold and challenge thinking about possible futures (Retz, 2015; Seixas, 2012; Wineburg,

2001); the second, in contrast, focuses on present issues of civic identity, which can be explained historically, for example, by studying underlying forces of discrimination and exclusion (Blevins, Salinas, & Talbert, 2015).

Research on controversial and sensitive issues in education has shown that social studies teachers use several strategies, ranging from denial and privilege to avoidance and balancing approaches (Hess, 2005). This discussion of how these teachers act or should act is also relevant for history teaching, especially in divided societies (Barton & McCully, 2007, 2012; Kello, 2016; Kitson & McCully, 2005; Traille, 2007). There may be differences, however, between teachers with strong convictions on communicating values and those who think the time difference between issues then and now is an obstacle for doing so. How these types of teachers are divided between history and social studies is a question for further research. This study contributes to this debate by illuminating the complexity of history teachers' reasoning about the past, using an analytical framework derived from theoretical debates in the discipline of history itself (e.g., the dimensions of time [shorter and longer distancing] and engagement [lower or higher] in thinking about the history curriculum).

This study has several limitations. The sample of six participants is obviously small and not representative of how Dutch teachers and educators navigate historical distance on TSTS. The topic of TSTS is also a specific one. At the time of the interviews, TSTS received ample attention in public debate in the Netherlands. It was on the brink of being recognized as a sensitive topic, acknowledged for there being different perspectives and emotions. The curriculum approaches of the participants in this study only refer to this topic, in the Dutch political context of 2010, which differed from topics in highly divided societies reported in other studies (such as Northern Ireland and Cyprus).

With regard to reliability, the results relate only to the participants' preparatory reasoning, not to how they would really act in a classroom or museum context. Although the participants appeared to be speaking frankly to me, the data may have been influenced by the fact I am an academic historian without family ties to the Caribbean. Obviously, this limitation also holds for the interpretation of the data and the way this study has been described here.

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NOTES

¹The Canon of the Netherlands can be accessed at <http://www.entoen.nl/en>.

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APPENDIX A

Questions of Interview 1

1. Do you personally feel connected in some way to this topic? If so, in what way?
Do you consider the organization that you work for to be a “heritage institution”? (educators)/Do you visit museums and/or archives with your students? (teachers)
Can you explain what makes something into “heritage”?
What do you associate “heritage education” with?
2. I want to talk to you about educational materials of heritage institutions and the topic *TSTS*:
What are—according to you—the most important learning goals for this kind of educational materials?
What characteristics do these materials need to have for successful learning (about this topic)?
3. I am interested in what the use of heritage could contribute to history education in general:
Can you give an example of successful use of heritage for history education? Why was it successful? How did students react?
Can you give an example of unsuccessful use of heritage for history education? Why was it unsuccessful? How did students react?
4. Let us imagine teaching a multicultural classroom of 14–15-year-old students about the *TSTS*. They will visit a museum with a special project on this topic:
How would you prepare for such a visit?
How would you want to end such a visit? With what content should a project about this topic best begin?
With what content should a project about this topic best end?
5. What are—according to you—typical student opinions about this topic?
Are there—according to you—opinions about this topic that are typical for certain cultural groups? Which are they?
Do you take the cultural background of your students into account when making educational material for this topic/teaching this topic? How do you do that?

APPENDIX B

Items of interview 2

1. Picture of slaves and ship (18th century)
2. Picture of resistance by a maroon (18th century)

3. Picture of plantation (19th century)
4. Picture of a hanging slave (18th century)
5. Photo of trading staff of official from Benin (18th century)
6. Photo of sculpture of mother and child from Congo (16th-18th century)
7. Photo of replica of royal golden stool from Ghana (Ashanti people)
8. Photo of stool from Ghana (Denkyira people, 19th century)
9. Photo of former WIC building in Amsterdam
10. Photos of statue of Piet Hein and his house of birth in Delfshaven (Rotterdam)
11. Photo of prison cell in fort Elmina, Ghana.
12. Citation from autobiography (1789) of former slave and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano
13. Citation from book on Suriname (1770) of WIC governor Jan Hartsinck
14. Picture of interior of slave ship *Brooks* (18th century)
15. Video clip about the middle passage from movie *Amistad* (1997) by Steven Spielberg
16. Picture of slave bracelet with name of plantation owner
17. Photo of drum used by slaves in Haïti
18. Photo of *carte de visite* from Sojourner Truth
19. Photo of national slavery monument in Amsterdam
20. Photo of slavery monument in Curaçao
21. Photo of child slave in Zanzibar (19th century)
22. Photo of Martin Luther King
23. Photo of Nelson Mandela
24. Citation of a modern historian on remembrance and the abuse of horror
25. Video clip with reggae song about modern trauma of a slavery past