

History Education for Transitional Justice:

How students understand and construct historical legacies in
the post-apartheid South African history classroom

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Michaelmas Term, 2020

Acknowledgements

I thoroughly enjoyed this DPhil in large part thanks to my supervisors Dr David Mills and Dr Jason Todd. Discussions with them were always empowering and insightful, and their personal commitments to student support and racial justice taught me how to live my values through my research. I am forever grateful for their examples of academia done right, and for their friendship.

I am grateful to Professor David Johnson, who encouraged me to pursue a DPhil, and to the Department of Education at the University of Oxford which created a nurturing and supportive environment in which to learn. I thank the ESRC for funding my DPhil, and for all the opportunities that this made possible.

The students and teachers who participated in this study were generous with their time and openness beyond what I could have expected. Their willingness to be vulnerable, and to learn together from this process of reflection, immeasurably enhanced this project. I learned more from these relationships than is reflected in this thesis. I hope this work will do justice to their generosity.

The Cape Town history teacher reading group was a great source of insight throughout my fieldwork and beyond. They helped me to feel connected to the classroom and offered new explanations when my data proved confusing. In particular I would like to thank Dr Kate Angier and Hannah Carrim for their engaged reflection on my data, and for always making me feel welcome.

Lastly I thank my husband David, who supports literally every aspect of my life. I am so tremendously lucky.

I dedicate this thesis to Mum and Dad, who taught me that “the purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.”

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Abstract

Central to the transitional justice agenda is a society's attempt "to come to terms with a *legacy* of large-scale past abuses" (United Nations, 2004, emphasis added). While there has been extensive scholarship on how students learn history in post-conflict societies, there has been almost no attention given to how students learn about historical legacies. The scholarly silence on post-conflict legacies is reflected in history curricula. The South African history curriculum – a focus of this study – deals extensively with large-scale past abuses, but does not require students to reflect on whether these past abuses have lasting effects.

This dissertation focuses on how young South Africans learn to construct legacies of historical injustices in the context of their history classrooms. It draws on nine months of ethnographic research in four Grade 9 history classrooms in Cape Town, each with a different racial composition. Every history class over three terms was observed, and teachers and students from each class were interviewed multiple times over the course of the year.

The research makes several important contributions to the field of history education and transitional justice. The first contribution is the theoretical framing of historical legacies as social constructs which are shaped by and give meaning to the present. This challenges both transitional justice scholarship which portrays legacies as "self-evident" (Stoler, 2016), and history education research which considers "legacy thinking" as an historical thinking skill (Foster et al, 2008). The socio-cultural approach to legacy construction – which this study pioneers – opens up an exciting new intersection of study.

By adopting an ethnographic methodology, this study contributes a new approach to researching how historical legacies are constructed and negotiated among young people in different classroom spaces. Wittenberg's (Wittenberg, 2015) conceptualization of "causal legacies" provides an important framework for the analysis of ethnographic data. The study pays particular attention to the factors that

mediate the construction of historical legacies – such as racial identity – and how these shape the ways in which students learn to develop explanations for contemporary society, and their own “historical identity” (Rüsen, 2014, p. 68).

Lastly, this dissertation contains detailed portraits of how historical legacies are negotiated, contested, and constructed in the Grade 9 South African history classroom. It suggests that there is great diversity in how apartheid legacies are constructed, even if the “historical facts” are largely consistent. Students in some classes, for example, learn about the horrors of apartheid, but also learn that those past abuses have no influence on their lives or contemporary society. These data furthermore demonstrate that history classrooms can have a strong influence on how students construct legacies. By exploring the contradictory ways in which students learn to construct apartheid legacies, we are in a stronger position to understand why transitional justice in South Africa continues to be so divisive.

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is 2016. In a mega-church on the outskirts of Cape Town the annual Justice Conference is taking place. Unaware that this was an inter-church event – yet attracted by the title and the speakers – I am feeling out of place. The last session exploring the Church's complicity in apartheid was certainly not pitched at me, and I don't know the words to any Christian rock songs. But I am impressed by the level of discourse. My upbringing in sectarian Northern Ireland has not prepared me for the enormity of the transitional justice challenge in post-apartheid South Africa.

Standing alone during the coffee break, juggling my program, paper cup, notepad and pen, I gravitate towards a confident-looking young man, holding court among a group of teenagers. He is a youth pastor and welcomes me into their circle despite my being at least a decade too old. The young people are discussing their responsibilities to South Africa, and it is a difficult conversation.

"I wasn't even alive when any of this happened," says one girl, her face scrunched in painful confusion; "Shouldn't I just be allowed to live my life?" The others nod, all eyes turned towards their pastor, desperate for answers.

The question posed by this fourteen-year-old is both innocent and profound. It touches upon a set of questions central to this dissertation; Does the past have contemporary legacies? How do they shape us? And how should we respond?

There are no easy answers. I too look towards the pastor, expectant and searching.

Background and rationale

Post-conflict societies expect a lot from their youth. Young people are often asked to be the solution to problems they did not create: to build justice, peace, and cohesion in societies that are structurally divided. They are asked to be part of a new narrative, and to construct a new identity, at a formative age when narrative and identity are both in flux. They are socialized into the wounds of the past without fully understanding what caused them.

Growing up in Northern Ireland, I remember countless workshops and residential weekends funded by the European Union under the budget line “Peace process”. While well-meaning, they made little sense to me. I did not understand the history of our small island and rejected opportunities to learn. The Troubles seemed distant. I regarded our problems as petty and I resented those who expected me to have an opinion. Only when I left Northern Ireland did I realize that flags do not have to engender fear, not all countries paint their kerb stones, and bomb scares are not “normal”. It was only when I left Northern Ireland that I realized I do not have any Catholic friends.

The conversation with the fourteen-year-old girl, recounted above, has stayed with me because I – like her – also wanted to just “live my life”. And when I think of that fourteen-year-old girl there is a poignancy for what I suspect she will also come to learn: that you cannot escape the history of your community. Even in rejection of a difficult past, there is acknowledgement of an assumed relationship. However she chooses to “live her life”, she will always be a part of the South African story – and that story includes apartheid.

I think this is what the virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre meant when he wrote, “I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 201) For MacIntyre (as for Aristotle), the narrative or teleological aspect of moral reflection was bound up with a membership and belonging that we do not always choose. It is

also what Rüsen refers to in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Rüsen, 2014) when he offers the parable of the Scottish castle. Ancient allegiances – in this case between clans – do not determine how we act in the present, but they do determine how that action is interpreted. “By means of historical identity,” writes Rüsen, “the human life expands its temporal extension beyond the limits of birth and death, beyond mere mortality” (Rüsen, 2014, p. 68).

This dissertation explores the stories that young South Africans understand themselves to be a part of. It looks at how they construct these stories, and – by association – how they construct their “historical identity”. This dissertation is not interested in making normative judgements about the “right” or “wrong” way to relate to the collective past. Rather, it recognizes that, in ways both explicit and implicit, young people in post-conflict societies are required to consider this relationship; and that their responses can have implications for transitional justice. After all, the question “What am I to do?” depends on which story we are a part of.

I have chosen to explore these “stories” through a focus on contemporary, causal historical legacies. Legacies – like stories – are always social constructs. Stoler (Stoler, 2016) reminds us that temporal connectivities are never self-evident or unproblematically accessed. The past persists, reactivates, and recurs in the present in ways that are complex and ambiguous. Our efforts to simplify this complexity, to provide clear and unambiguous relationships between past and present, should be understood as a form of meaning-making. We construct legacies to temporally orientate ourselves; we use causal legacies to explain the present and interpret ourselves within it. Legacies therefore communicate a truth beyond a series of disconnected historical ‘facts’. As this dissertation will argue, they are also critical to transitional justice. How legacies of historical injustice are addressed will depend on how legacies of historical injustice are constructed.

Lastly, this dissertation is interested in history education, and the ways in which classroom experiences shape how students construct historical legacies. In contributing to the history education literature, this

dissertation extends previous conceptions of “historical thinking skills”, and instead seeks to understand the socio-cultural factors that shape one's relationship with the past. This is particularly important in divided societies where the framework of “historical thinking skills” may not encapsulate the full political implication or cost of certain historical interpretations.

A focus on history education – rather than on communities, families, or religious gatherings – brings this research into conversation with policy and politics. History education in South Africa, as in many post-conflict societies, has specific political aims. It aligns itself with the needs of transitional justice, and seeks to promote “social cohesion”. The perceived failure of the history curriculum to meet these aims has led the South African government to establish a History Ministerial Task Team, which subsequently recommended that history education should be compulsory for all South African students. “In the current context,” begins the Ministerial Task Team report, “where interest in ‘history’ is dwindling, democrats are appalled at the current lack of social and historic consciousness amongst the youth, and students rail against the slow pace at which the historic, social and economic landscape is transforming, debate on the goals of History as a school subject have reopened” (Ndlovu, et al., 2018, p. 7)

Yet the recommendations offered by the History Ministerial Task Team are not substantiated by empirical evidence from classrooms. The advocacy for simply *more* history education belies whether history education – in its current form – actually contributes to transitional justice. This dissertation is therefore positioned to make an important contribution. It offers insight into how young people construct historical legacies in the context of the history classroom, and how these legacies shape their interpretations of contemporary society. Thick descriptions of history teaching, classroom culture, and student engagement, combined with in-depth teacher and student interviews, help to build a complex picture of how historical legacies are negotiated and contested. Crucially, they demonstrate how historical legacies are constructed differently across different classrooms and racial identities, suggesting that education may be reinforcing social interpretations along historically divided lines.

Chapter Outlines

This dissertation comprises ten chapters. In Chapter Two, I outline the theoretical arguments that provide the background to this study. In particular I review the literature on transitional justice, which suggests that certain forms of historical “truth telling” risk neutralizing historical injustices. To address legacies of a difficult past, history education needs to be a place where legacies of the past are explicitly discussed. When referring to “legacies” I draw on work by Stoler (Stoler, 2016) and Weiner (Weiner, 2013) to suggest that historical legacies are social constructs, which do “work” in the present. Wittenberg’s conceptualization of historical legacies – as being constructed from an “antecedent”, “mechanism” and “outcome” (Wittenberg, 2015, p. 366) – is an important tool for identifying and analyzing legacy constructs.

I put this conceptualization of historical legacies into dialogue with history education literature relating to “usable pasts” (Foster, 2008) and “cause and consequence” (Sexias & Morton, 2013). However it also extends the history education literature by focusing on the socio-cultural factors – rather than the historical thinking factors – which shape how students use the past. Lastly, I review previous studies which have sought to examine history education in South Africa. I demonstrate that a comparative study of how historical legacies are constructed in South African history classrooms has never been attempted before.

In Chapter Three I seek to contextualize the South African history classroom. I begin with a discussion of transitional justice in South Africa, describing the rationale and critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). I then review the changes in the South African history curriculum between the 1950s and 2018 (when fieldwork for this study was conducted). In particular, I discuss the current Grade 9 history curriculum and textbooks. Lastly, I provide some context on the funding structure of schools in South Africa and how South African history teachers are trained.

In Chapter Four I outline the research design and methodological approach to this study. I begin by discussing the theoretical considerations and justifications for this approach, with a particular focus on why I chose to conduct ethnographic observations and interviews. I suggest that an ethnographic approach is valuable given my interest in how students construct historical legacies. In Part Two of this chapter I describe the practical approaches that I took to collecting the data: this included gaining access to the four schools, conducting classroom observations, and teacher and student interviews. Lastly, I describe my approach to data analysis, and the coding technique that I used to analyze the classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups.

Chapters Five, Six, Seven, and Eight discuss the findings from each of the four case study schools. Each chapter follows the same structure. In the first half of each chapter I provide rich ethnographic portraits of the school, the history teacher, and two of the students who participated in interviews. These portraits include details about the school culture, as well as family histories of the participants. In the second half of each chapter I describe the ways in which historical legacies were negotiated and constructed in each classroom. I look first at how the teacher spoke about the relationship between the past and the present. I focus on whether he constructed the relationship as continuous or discontinuous, and whether he drew causal relationships between the past and the present. I then discuss how the students spoke about the relationship between the past and the present. In particular, I explore whether and how students use the past to explain contemporary phenomena.

In Chapter Nine I discuss the findings presented in the empirical chapters. I look first at the different ways that historical legacies are constructed across the four schools. In particular, I compare how students who identify in racially-similar ways, but who attend different schools, think about apartheid's contemporary legacies. In the second half of the chapter, I look at the factors which mediate the construction of historical legacies, including racial identities, family histories, social mobility, and emotional needs.

In Chapter Ten I outline some of the key contributions that this study makes, as well as its policy implications, and future research agendas. I focus on contributions to three areas; historical legacies, history teaching, and transitional justice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

My dissertation is set within, and contributes to, scholarship on transitional justice and research on history education. Within each body of literature, I review key debates intersecting and orienting my empirical chapters.

Part One reviews scholarship on the role of truth-telling in transitional justice. I show how historical legacies have been neglected and remain unproblematized within this work. Drawing on work by Stoler (Stoler, 2016), Weiner (Weiner, 2013) and Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015) I suggest that historical legacies are cultural tools for contemporary purposes; they are an important way in which people learn to make sense of the present. As such, they are of particular interest in post-conflict societies where approaches to transitional justice are often contested in the context of legacies of the past. The field of transitional justice would therefore benefit from research into how historical legacies are constructed.

In Part Two I review debates in history education about teaching historical legacies. I suggest that within scholarship on historical thinking skills, a focus on causality and “usable pasts” (Foster, 2008) intersects fruitfully with Wittenberg’s (Wittenberg, 2015) conceptualization of historical legacies. However, I also review debates regarding the disciplinary vs sociocultural approach to studying the ways in which young people make connections between the past and the present. I align my work with Keynes (Keynes, 2019) who suggests that for the purposes of transitional justice, a sociocultural approach is most appropriate.

Lastly, in Part Three I review existing ethnographic studies of South African history classrooms. This scholarship highlights the ways in which history classrooms are being used as spaces for the construction and negotiation of historical legacies in post-conflict contexts. In turn, they shape and are shaped by

students' understanding of the present. This review identifies the contribution of an ethnographic study of how young people learn to construct legacies of conflict, and the role of history education for promoting transitional justice.

Part One: History for transitional justice

Transitional justice is a concept that has been applied to post-conflict states undergoing statewide reforms in the wake of historical injustices such as genocide, mass violence, and human rights violations (Miles, 2018, p. 297). It refers to efforts which seek to redress historical injustices in post-conflict societies. In recent years, with the expansion and refinement of the field of transitional justice, a growing emphasis on education as a partner for peacebuilding and justice has developed (Keynes, 2019). Conceptual work has shown that education and transitional justice might work together and reinforce one another in ways that contribute to transformation (Cole & Murphy, 2009; Davies, 2007; Novelli, Cardozo, & Smith, 2015; Paulson, 2009).

However, according to Keynes (Keynes, 2019) the role of education in transitional justice is still “under conceptualized” (p. 113), and as a result faces many challenges. I situate this dissertation within debates about the role of “truth-telling” in post-conflict history education. I suggest that within this debate “historical legacies” arise as an important question for further investigation. Reflecting on the work of Stoler (Stoler, 2016) I seek to problematize “historical legacies” as they are commonly referred to within transitional justice discourse. Instead, I align my conceptualization of historical legacies with that of Weiner (Weiner, 2013) and Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015) to propose how future research could focus on the construction of causality in post-conflict history education.

Truth-telling

The role of truth-telling is a central debate within the literature on transitional justice. According to Keynes it is a stated aim of transitional justice to establish what happened in the past in order to redress and acknowledge harms (Keynes, 2019, p. 118). Indeed, Keynes argues that “the idea of truth telling is a paradigmatic concept of transitional justice and the truth commission is arguably its chief innovation” (Keynes, 2019, p. 118-119). The role of history education within this model of transitional justice is to facilitate truth-telling and remembrance among the next generation.

The ‘right to truth’ has become a feature of international law since the early 1990s and a hallmark of transitional justice since the 1995 South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It pioneered a victim-centric approach to truth-telling and provided reparation to victims and amnesty to perpetrators who cooperated, representing a departure from the restitutive focus of transitional justice. According to Bevernage (Bevernage, 2014) it epitomized the ‘historical turn’ in the field, whereby officially sanctioned truth-telling about the past could provide an alternative form of justice to traditional legal sanctions.

However, the interest in post-conflict truth-telling has extended far beyond the discourse of transitional justice. A major study on post-conflict reconstruction by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Association of the United States Army, for example, proclaimed truth-telling to be one of “four pillars” of successful peacebuilding (Flournoy & Pan, 2002; Hamre & Sullivan, 2002). Similarly, in its comprehensive handbook for international donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and post-conflict governments, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Bloomfield, Barnes, & Huyse, 2003) included truth-telling as one of four necessary mechanisms for achieving reconciliation, and ultimately lasting peace, after violent conflict. Appropriately conceptualizing truth-telling is therefore likely to have broad ramifications.

But why is truth-telling considered so important for peace? A review of the literature on transitional justice suggests that there are three reasons: The first is so that wrongs can be righted in what might be considered a judicial sense (Gready & Robins, 2020, p. 286). The second is for the purposes of individual and collective psychological healing (Minow, 1998, p. 127). The third is for the political process of constructing a “foundation myth” or official narrative (Weldon, 2006). “Part of the process of ‘moving on’”, argues Weldon (Weldon, 2006, p.4), “is creating a common national identity which reflect memories that acknowledge the trauma of the past in a way that prevents denial”. This “common national identity” is thought to contribute towards social cohesion in societies whose members may in the past have occupied opposing sides of a conflict.

History education as truth-telling

The common idea of history education as producing historical truth and facilitating remembrance is commonly aligned with the broad aims of transitional justice. It is therefore not surprising that the most frequent educational engagement of Truth Commissions is to recommend educational content. An analysis of Truth Commission final reports (Paulson & Bellino, 2017) for example, found that 16 reports called for non-formal education programs, and 15 reports recommended the development of new content or subject areas within formal education. Furthermore, Truth Commission reports have provided source material for official textbooks and alternative educational materials developed by human rights organizations in Guatemala (Oglesby, 2007), South Africa (Weldon, 2010), and Peru (Paulson J., 2017). In the absence of a history education that facilitates truth-telling, history educators warned that a “social amnesia” (Chapman, 2007) might prevail, and “if the origins of conflict are not addressed effectively, then instability remains” (McCully, 2010, p. 176).

However transitional justice scholarship is beginning to problematize the idea of “truth-telling” (Gready & Robins, 2020), particularly in the classroom setting. Several researchers (Keynes, 2019; Miles, 2018) have warned that the emphasis on ‘truth-telling’ in post-conflict history classrooms often ignores

considerations of how that truth is being told. There are two important ways in which truth can be structured to “neutralize a history of wrongs” (Cornthassel & Holder, 2008, p. 466) and side-step justice. The first is by isolating acute violence (torture, sexual abuse) from structural violence (apartheid, colonialism) (Nagy, 2012). The second – which Miles (Miles, 2018) describes as “temporality” (p. 306) – is by closing over a history of oppression without due recognition of its persisting, structural manifestations (Cornthassel & Holder, 2008). These two “neutralizing” approaches are, of course, interconnected: By isolating the violence to the level of the individual, that violence necessarily ends when the individual ceases to feel or remember the violence. It is only when structural violence is recognized that there is a possibility for the temporal persistence of injustice.

The TRC has been heavily criticized by South African scholars such as Posel and Simpson (Posel and Simpson, 2002) for this reason. Posel and Simpson have argued that the isolation of acute violence from structural violence (Posel and Simpson, 2002, p. 244) and the TRC’s controversial decision to focus only on gross human rights violations meant that the legislated structural violence of segregation, economic exploitation, and unequal education fell outside the TRC’s scope. By individualizing accountability, collectivizing suffering, and side-lining discussions of beneficiaries (Posel & Simpson, 2002; Wilson, 2001), the TRC dealt with the past. However, it did so in ways that safeguarded the majority of White South Africans from having to account for how they benefitted, and continue to benefit, from apartheid.

Matsunaga (Matsunaga, 2016) echoed a similar criticism in the Canadian context, which like South Africa was a settler colony. By arguing that the Government of Canada understood reconciliation to be only about changing attitudes and beliefs, it avoided and silenced conversations about greater structural change. Transitional justice in Canada became loosely understood as a process of reconciling relationships and changing perceptions, but not about land, sovereignty, and justice (Miles, 2018). The historical narrative of national progress served to legitimize the settler colonial state, when it was the very existence of this state that mechanisms of transitional justice should have been questioning.

Miles (Miles, 2018) suggests that the Canadian attempt at truth and reconciliation has also been plagued by the issue of temporality. He suggests that an example of “closing over” a history of oppression is best demonstrated by former Canadian Prime Minister Harper, when he stated in the official government apology for the Residential Schools that this was “a sad chapter in our history” (Government of Canada, 2010, cited in Miles, 2018, p. 302). Harper’s statement, much echoed in the media, temporally framed settler colonialism as an event of the past, one that is disconnected from present society and current institutions. Miles argued that such a discourse which temporalizes historical injustice as a “dark part” or “sad chapter” (Government of Canada, cited in Miles, 2018, p. 302) in our history works to deny or silence both broader historical narratives and ongoing injustices. It is therefore concerning that in a forthcoming study (Miles, Forthcoming) of Canadian history classrooms, Miles shows how this temporal closure is also used by well-meaning teachers to turn injustice into an “event” which students understand to be “over”.

What these authors have argued is that “truth-telling” does not necessarily contribute to transitional justice in post-conflict societies, even when it is an integrated aspect of the history curriculum. History education which exposes past injustices as a series of individualized events which are understood to be over is in danger of communicating to students that there are no wrongs left to right. To contribute to transitional justice, students need to understand that historical injustice can be both structural, and contemporary; historical injustices can persist structurally into the present. History education therefore needs to consider the contemporary legacies of historical injustice, rather than simply the historical injustice itself.

The focus on historical legacies is supported by recent conceptual developments in the field of transitional justice. According to Bellino et al (Bellino, Paulson, & Worden, 2017), one of the paradigmatic tasks for education as a mechanism of transitional justice is to employ a “dual gaze” (Davies L., 2017) looking back to past abuses and ahead to the future prevention of their recurrence. Bellino et al (Bellino et al., 2017) argue that transitional justice is both temporally and ideologically

committed to past and present, and therefore requires looking forward and backward – or perhaps looking to the future through the lens of the past. Maintaining this dual gaze, they argue, demands that education in transitional justice contexts addresses legacies of conflict and division that reside within educational structures, contexts, and curricula. It is not sufficient to increase access to schools without also understanding the historical reasons why certain groups still struggle to gain access. This is an exciting conceptual development, which this dissertation hopes to further.

Indeed, a review of the literature on truth-telling within societies that have experienced historical injustice suggests that the issue of historical legacies has been a recurring, if not prominent theme. McCully advocates most directly for a focus on historical legacies in his paper entitled *History teaching, conflict and the legacy of the past* (McCully, 2012). Faced with the challenges posed by teaching history in post-conflict contexts, McCully critiques the prevailing view that an enquiry-based, multi-perspective “truth-telling” approach offers the most effective way for history teaching to contribute to post-conflict understanding. Rather, he draws on empirical evidence from studies conducted in Northern Ireland to suggest that the impact of history education is limited unless the history learned in schools is made directly relevant to young peoples’ day-to-day cultural and political experiences, i.e. unless students are investigating contemporary legacies. Furthermore, empirical evidence (Barton & McCully, 2005; Barton & McCully, 2010) suggested that students in Northern Ireland actively sought a history that helps them to understand the present.

Scholars such as Murphy (Murphy, 2017), Ladson-Billings (Ladson-Billings, 2006), and McCully (McCully, 2012) have also warned that ignoring legacies of the past has dangerous implications for transitional justice, since it conceals the causes of contemporary problems and thus makes justice less realizable. As time passes, explains Murphy (Murphy, 2017, cited in Bellino et al, 2017), legacies of historical injustice which are not addressed become less visible and thus more normalized, so that future-orientated reforms often become disarticulated from the historical processes that contributed to challenges embedded in the status quo. Reflecting on educational disparities in the US, Ladson-Billings

(Ladson-Billings, 2006) famously argued for a conceptual shift from ‘the achievement gap’ as a way of explaining and understanding the persistent inequality that exists (and has always existed) in US schools to ‘an education debt’ accrued through historical, economic, socio-political, and moral injustices. In reframing educational disparities in this way, Ladson-Billings foregrounded both the historical legacies of the disparities, and the need for transitional justice in the US context.

Several scholars have equally warned that not addressing historical legacies can undermine the social fabric, particularly in already-divided societies. Rafferty (Rafferty, 2013) has suggested that it is only in connecting history to present-day society that the potential of history teaching to contribute to social cohesion truly becomes manifest; “If historical events are discussed as detached and irrelevant issues, the opportunity to develop the skills for living peacefully in present day society can be lost” (Rafferty, 2013, p. 28). Barton and Levstik (Barton and Levstik, 2004) similarly argue that the belief that historic injustices have already been overcome may render students ill-prepared to engage with such issues more fully in adulthood. While Shreiner (Shreiner, 2014) argues that if history is indeed important for citizenship, it is because citizens must not only know history, but also must be able to effectively use history to reason about issues within the civic domain.

Lastly, scholars who advocate for a greater focus on historical legacies warn that without recognizing legacies of historical injustices, history curricula in post-conflict societies are at risk of adopting a human rights or peace education framework which universalizes and decontextualizes violence (Cremin, 2015; Horner, 2013). Often peace education espouses a forward-looking approach promising future peace that is not grounded in an understanding of the past and its legacies in the present. According to Bellino (Bellino, 2014) these curricula are often implemented as abstract principles to be memorized, leaving students to make past-present connections on their own. This approach is more likely to whitewash legacies of historical injustices – or even actively dissuade students from engaging in difficult conversations for fear of rupturing a fragile peace – rather than serving the needs of transitional justice.

The review of literature suggests that there is a critical need in the field of transitional justice for history education to focus on legacies of the past, rather than simply “truth-telling” about the past. Without a focus on legacies of the past, history education is at risk of adopting an approach which universalizes and decontextualizes violence. This leaves young people at a disadvantage when seeking to understand and address contemporary problems. I situate my dissertation within this critique of truth-telling and seek to develop a research agenda which focuses on how young people construct legacies of historical injustices in the context of their history education. In particular I foreground the ways in which young people learn to explain and interpret the causes of contemporary problems. First, however, I turn to a discussion of what historical legacies are, and how we should understand them.

Conceptualizing Historical Legacies

As has been outlined above, scholars at the intersection of transitional justice and history education advocate for an educational focus on historical legacies. Historical legacies are foundational to transitional justice as a political project. The United Nations for example, defined transitional justice as “the full range for processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a *legacy* of large-scale past abuses” (2004, emphasis added). That “difficult pasts” have “legacies”, which need to be “addressed” (Bellino, Paulson, & Worden, 2017, p. 317) is a largely unquestioned assumption in the field of transitional justice. To question the existence of historical legacies – or the nature of that existence – would arguably undermine the important work that many of these scholars seek to further.

However for the purposes of history education for transitional justice, I suggest that a more robust and critical engagement with historical legacies is required. This critical engagement would foreground two aspects of the debate: The first is to problematize the portrayal of essentialized relationships between the past and the present, which some within the field of transitional justice simply summarize as “legacy”. In this regard I draw on the scholarly work of Stoler (Stoler, 2016) who highlights the complex and

shifting “entailments” of the past. The second is to understand that legacies are social and political constructs that do “work” in the present. They do not exist as an abstract truth, waiting to be learned or realized. Rather, they are constantly fashioned and refashioned in light of contemporary needs, questions, and interests. In this regard I draw on the scholarly work of Weiner (Weiner, 2013) who traces the various constructions of colonial legacies. In doing so I suggest the importance of understanding how legacies are constructed in post-conflict societies.

A review of literature on young people and teachers in post-conflict societies suggests that the term “legacy” has not enjoyed conceptual clarity. It is frequently used interchangeably to evoke both an unquestioned essentialized relationship between the past and the present, as well as to refer to the ways in which participants construct and use this relationship. McCully, for example, advocates for an history education that deals critically with “legacies of the more recent past” (McCully, 2012, p. 145). In this regard he implies that legacies are “self-evident and unproblematically identified and accessed” (Stoler, 2016, p.4). Teeger (Teeger, 2014; Teeger, 2015) jumps between these two conceptualizations. She evokes a realist understanding of past-present relationships when she describes how history lessons “threaten to mute the realities of systemic oppression and to blind individuals to legacies of these histories in the present” (Teeger, 2015, p. 1196). Yet in another paper she describes how Black respondents highlighted “a variety of structural legacies that contribute to contemporary social problems” (Teeger, 2014, p. 72), suggesting that these legacies are racially-mediated constructs. Wills (Wills, 1996), by contrast, suggests an entirely constructivist view of legacies, as he describes the different ways in which teachers and students in a Californian classroom make connections between the past and the present. Yet he then implies that the students have constructed the ‘wrong’ legacies, and thus advises that the curriculum be changed.

This brief review of how the term “legacy” is used suggests that it requires more sophisticated theorization. This is challenging, since relatively little has been done to conceptualize historical legacies. However, within the field of post-colonial studies, scholars have begun to engage in the question of how

to think about the impact of the past on the present. I suggest that these insights may help further both history education pedagogy, and research on history education. For the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on what it might offer the scholarly field of history education and transitional justice.

Stoler, in her book *Duress* (Stoler, 2016), argues that there are no “self-evident” legacies (Stoler, 2016, p. 4). Indeed, she questions whether “postcolonial studies has too readily assumed knowledge of the multiple forms in which colonial pasts bear on the present and has been too quick to assert what is actually postcolonial in current situations” (Stoler, 2016, p. 343). Rather, she argues that colonial pasts are “so ineffably threaded through the fabric of contemporary life forms they seem indiscernible as distinct effects, as if everywhere and nowhere at all” (Stoler, 2016, p. 5). The question is not therefore whether the past and present are in relationship, but rather “how to convey how those histories remain present” (Stoler, 2016, p. 24). Models of “rupture” and “continuity” suggest Stoler, both get us in trouble, since they leave unaddressed the most difficult issues around the durability and distribution of colonial entailments that cling to the present conditions of people’s lives (Stoler, 2016, p. 25). “Can we provide an adequate vocabulary to identify what a “colonial presence” looks like?” (Stoler, 2016, p. 26) is her central question.

While Stoler’s work provides no straightforward answers, it does encourage us to be skeptical of those who position historical legacies as natural or “self-evident”. Indeed, as Stoler suggests, our expectations about what the connectivities between past and present should look like at times prevents the recognition of “colonial genealogies” (Stoler, 2016, p. 133). When teachers and students – or indeed scholars and academics – discuss legacies as essentialized relationships we should be attuned to how these relationships are being selectively chosen, and then “deployed strategically” (Stoler, 2016, p. 344) for social, emotional, or political purposes. This is a particularly important insight in the context of post-conflict societies, where constructed legacies have implications for “redemption, apology, and retribution” (Stoler, 2016, p. 345).

Crucially therefore, the work of the education researcher is different to that of Stoler (Stoler, 2016). While Stoler seeks to identify “colonial presence” (Stoler, 2016, p. 345), my aim is not to identify the effects of the past in the present. Rather, I am interested in how teachers and students in post-conflict societies think about the effects of the past in the present; I refer to this as “legacy thinking”. Foregrounded throughout this research is the recognition that there are no “self-evident” legacies. However, the ways in which legacy ideas are constructed, deployed, contested, negotiated, debated, and shared, have important consequences and are worth investigating.

In this regard, Martin Weiner’s (Weiner, 2013) work on the changing “colonial legacy” of the British Empire finds congruence with that of Stoler (Stoler, 2016). He reflects on the constructed nature of historical legacies, and the social, emotional, and political work that they do. To most scholars during the last half-century of the British Empire, he argues, the damaging legacies of the empire were largely ignored in favor of emphasizing the material and institutional advancements that colonized countries benefited from. Today this view of the empire has not only been rejected, but inverted. The idea of a strong “colonial legacy” remains pervasive, but now in highly negative terms. Weiner argues that in contemporary historiography “most of the problems new states have encountered have been attributed at some point to the legacy left by former European colonial rulers” (Weiner, 2013, p. 2).

Most interesting however is Weiner’s analysis of why these new “negative” legacies arose. He suggests that disappointment that the end of colonialism had not yielded better results led many to locate the source of these post-colonial problems outside the control of the new states and their peoples. Although this both exaggerated the impact of colonialism, and down-played the pre-colonial violence, Weiner suggests that scholars have been discouraged from scrutinizing the role of post (or pre-) colonial actors out of fear that they would appear to be abandoning the “side” of the formerly colonized (Weiner, 2013, p. 31). What he therefore points to are the ways in which our understanding of historical legacies interacts with our own identities and ideological positions in the present. At least in part, we use historical legacies to support contemporary positions. It is important to therefore recognize that our analysis of historical

legacies is influenced by the present; as our identities and ideologies change, so too does our analysis of historical legacies.

Together, Weiner and Stoler point to an important research agenda for history education in post-conflict societies. Rather than researching how historical legacies are “highlighted” (Teeger, 2014, p. 72), “dealt with” (McCully, 2012, p. 146; Weldon, 2010, p. 358), “acknowledged” (Keynes, 2019, p. 116) or “denied” (Teeger, 2015, p. 1196), we should investigate how and why they are “constructed” and “deployed” as tools for identity and meaning making. By recognizing that the impact of the past on the present is always “multiple”, “shifting”, and “complex” (Stoler, 2016), the role of the education researcher is then to understand how our participants weave meaning out of this multiple, shifting, and complex temporal relationship. Importantly, we recognize that there is nothing inevitable about the ways in which legacies are constructed.

The post-structuralist rethinking of historical legacies opens up exciting space for the academic field of history education and transitional justice. Rather than researching whether historical legacies are being taught, I propose a study of how historical legacies are being constructed in multiple, and shifting forms, and which needs they are being “deployed strategically” (Stoler, 2016, p. 344) to meet. Such a study provides analytical space for understanding how historicized and politicized identities shape understandings of the relevance of difficult pasts on contemporary society. When I refer to “legacies”, I am therefore referring to temporal relationships which are social constructs. To foreground my conceptualization of legacies as social constructs, I also refer to “legacy constructions”.

However, recognizing that legacies are constructed in multiple ways still leaves the question of how to identify legacies for the purposes of research and analysis. In this regard I find the work of the historian Jason Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015) to be helpful. Wittenberg outlines what counts as an historical legacy, and what the structural features of legacy-type arguments are. In conceptualizing the structural features of an historical legacy, Wittenberg identifies three basic components (Wittenberg, 2015, p. 366).

The first is an outcome (or pattern of outcomes) that appears inexplicable, or at least not fully explicable, given circumstances contemporaneous with that outcome. A second component is a purported antecedent to the outcome that is identified as either a cause or a correlate of that outcome. A third component is a mechanism (or at least a purported or hypothesized mechanism) that fills in the links leading from the antecedent to the outcome to be explained.

In Wittenberg's model, he suggests that what we call the "legacy" is the outcome to be explained, not the antecedent or the mechanism linking antecedent and outcome (Wittenberg, 2015, p. 369). An outcome qualifies as a legacy only if it cannot be fully explained except by reference to an antecedent cause or correlate. As a direct consequence of this temporal structure, all legacy arguments must feature at least an implicit division between a past period (when the antecedent cause or correlate are identified) and a latter period (when the outcome occurs). Furthermore, in cases where the antecedent is a cause (rather than a correlate), an outcome qualifies as a legacy only if that explanatory factor ceased to directly operate at some point before the outcome is observed.

Diagram 1: Wittenberg's (2015) conceptualization of an historical legacy



While Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015) does not necessitate that the "outcome"/"legacy" be contemporary, scholars of history education (Rafferty, 2013) – as outlined above – suggest that study of how contemporary legacies are constructed are likely to be of most interest to post-conflict education researchers. Furthermore "causal antecedents" are likely to be of more relevance to transitional justice than "correlate antecedents", since causal antecedents offer an *explanation* for *why* contemporary

legacies exist. For the purposes of this dissertation therefore, I use historical legacies to refer to contemporary legacies with causal antecedents, unless otherwise stated.

The structure of legacies that Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015) outlines is helpful when analyzing and comparing how students and teachers construct legacies. It allows the researcher to deconstruct how the participant has placed various events or patterns in relation to each other, even if the participant might consider these ways “self-evident”. As Wittenberg argues, “any conceivable outcome is a product of some prior causal factor, though that factor may be incredibly difficult to identify... all outcomes are therefore legacies in the context of antecedent causes” (Wittenberg, 2015, p. 370). There are therefore no ‘natural’ outcomes or legacies; identifying patterns or events across time as “components” within the structure of historical legacies is a choice. Similarly, the division that is made between a past and latter period – e.g. “apartheid” and “post-apartheid” – is not a natural division, but one which is chosen. These choices can be identified and analyzed as a form of meaning making, and a tool used to interpret the present. A “double temporality” is at play; the legacy is shaped by the antecedent in the past, and the interpretation in the present.

Part Two: Disciplinary Approaches to historical legacies

Stoler (Stoler, 2016), Weiner (Weiner, 2013), and Wittenberg’s (Wittenberg, 2015) discussions of historical legacies intersect fruitfully with an extensive education literature on historical thinking skills. This literature has sought both to improve the ways in which history is taught, and to develop approaches to researching history education. While the literature that I review speaks to both agendas, I focus in particular on what it contributes to the field of history education research.

Historical thinking skills refer to the use of critical thinking skills to process information and construct meaning about the past (Trombino D.L., 2012). Cause and consequence is one historical thinking skill (Sexias & Morton, 2013) that is of particular interest for how this dissertation seeks to conceptualize

historical legacies, and provides insight into how historical legacies are addressed in history classrooms. Since antecedents may be causes of outcomes, since causes are used to *explain* contemporary society, and since causes are socially constructed, it is important to understand how students are taught to think about causality. The way students think about causation is likely to influence how they construct historical legacies and explain contemporary phenomena.

Causality

In his book *What is History?*, E.H. Carr famously declared that “the study of history is a study of causes” (Carr, 1961, p. 87). Evans has similarly argued that “in the end, everybody knows that the present is affected by the past, that what happens today can affect or cause what happens tomorrow or the day after” (Evans, 1997, p. 157). He goes on to say that historians “see it as their duty to establish a *hierarchy* of causes and to explain if relevant the relationship of one cause to another” (Evans, 1997, p. 158). It is therefore not surprising that history educators have placed great emphasis on how students learn about causal reasoning. As Harris, Burn, and Woolley (Harris, Burn, & Woolley, 2014, p. 156) have argued, “because an understanding of causation underpins not only our analysis of so much in history but also our ability to understand and analyze different and often competing accounts of the past, it is worth exploring what causation actually means with students.”

For example, Seixas and Morton (Seixas & Morton, 2013) identify “Cause and Consequence” as one of their “Big Six” historical thinking concepts that history teachers should integrate into all aspects of their teaching. In regard to how cause and consequence should be addressed with students, they offer five “guideposts”. They suggest for example, that students should learn that change is driven by multiple causes, and results in multiple consequences; that some causes and consequences are more influential than others; that some events result from individuals who take actions, while others result from broader social, political, economic, and cultural conditions; that some consequences are unintended; and finally, that historical events are not inevitable.

However, while the history education literature has been interested in what makes a ‘good’ causal analysis and how it should be assessed (Burnham & Brown, 2004), the field of transitional justice might benefit simply from an investigation of what causal analysis students are engaging in, and the ways in which they are politicized. Epstein and Peck describe this as a distinction between a “disciplinary approach” and a “sociocultural approach” (Epstein & Peck, 2018, p. 4) to research, each of which differ in their assumptions about historical thinking and the nature of historical narratives. While recognizing that these two approaches are not dichotomous, it is valuable to explore each in turn.

Disciplinary approaches, according to Epstein and Peck often conceptualize historical thinking from the "inside out" (Epstein & Peck, 2018, p. 4). According to Epstein and Peck, “an individual evaluates and synthesizes historical evidence to construct an argument about the causes, consequences or other aspects of historical events or other phenomena” (Epstein & Peck, 2018, p.4). Within an understanding of a disciplinary approach, a person transcends their own perspectives and positionality, in order to “rationally evaluate evidence to construct an interpretation” (Epstein & Peck, 2018, p. 4) about the past in a way that is as objective as possible. Epstein and Peck’s description of disciplinary approaches reflects Fullbrook’s conception of history as “like seeing through a glass darkly” (Fullbrook, 2002, p. 185); it is neither a transparent window on the past, nor a picture, constructed in the present, replacing a past which we can never really know. This is the approach to historical investigation that history educators such as Seixas and Morton (Seixas & Morton, 2013) seek to promote in the history curriculum.

In contrast, sociocultural approaches – according to Epstein and Peck (Epstein & Peck, 2018, p. 4) – view historical thinking from the "outside in". Within a sociocultural approach, it is understood that an individual’s evaluation of historical evidence and construction of arguments about the past is heavily influenced by the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which an individual has learned to act and think. As Epstein and Peck (Epstein & Peck, 2018, p. 4) describe:

“While an individual can become aware of her and others' mental models, she can never entirely escape the mental model or framework she has constructed of how human thought and action operate. Every historical narrative, including those of the most professional historians, reflect the internal culturally mediated framework – which in turn reflects broader societal beliefs and knowledge – that the individual draws upon to think historically.”

However, scholars such as Keynes (Keynes, 2019) are beginning to suggest that all disciplinary approaches should in fact be treated as sociocultural in the context of the classroom, and that this is particularly important in settler-colonial contexts. Keynes warns against the ways in which causal relationships can be depoliticized – and made to seem “natural” (Keynes, 2019, p. 130) – through a disciplinary focus on historical thinking skills. Students are taught to discern and construct the actions and intentions of historical actors, leading to both intended and unintended consequences. These actions are made meaningful when they are connected into a synthesized historical narrative which gives retroactive form to their deeds. However, “by constructing the past as sequences of causally connected events which have produced the present,” argues Keynes, “students’ perceptions of the present are shaped by the illusory logic of historical causality, and flawed understandings of history as an authoritative, explanatory framework are reinforced” (Keynes, 2019, p. 130). She goes on to say,

“When forms of historicization such as the production of historical distance and the demarcation of temporal boundaries are not treated explicitly, and instead remain latent, history education continues to imagine that disciplinary history occupies an epistemologically foundational position capable of producing ‘truth’ from the historian’s expertise and neutral authority. When historicizing effects like these go unspoken in the history classroom, the illusory authority of historical discourse and the idea that historians inherently ‘know’ the ‘proper’ place of phenomena in time, as if epochs are naturally given and not constructed by history-makers, continue to be reproduced.” (Keynes, 2019, p. 131)

Keynes' discussion of the limitations of disciplinary history education as a tool for transitional justice is as relevant for education researchers as it is for history teachers. It foregrounds the methodological

importance of not assuming the “neutral authority” (Keynes, 2019, p. 131) of causal reasoning, even if in the classroom the “relevant relationship of one cause to another” (Evans, 1997, p. 158) is treated as a “neutral, disciplinary science” (Keynes, 2019, p. 132).

This dissertation is informed by the sociocultural approach to researching students’ engagement with historical causality. My study develops Keynes’ critique by empirically investigating how power, positionality, and identity inform or mediate the causal connections that South African students develop or appropriate. This focus on causal connections would contribute to scholarship on how students construct and deploy historical legacies as a tool to explain contemporary phenomena.

Using the past

In developing a sociocultural approach to understanding how students engage with historical causality, my dissertation engages with debates on how students construct “usable historical pasts” (Foster, 2008). How students use the past is a fascinating area of scholarly investigation - most commonly situated within the field of history education. While studies situated in the field of history tend to look at legacies of the past (looking from the past and working forward), education researchers have more typically been interested in how young people use history in the present (looking at contemporary issues and working backwards). Research which looks at how students use the past has not referred explicitly to historical legacies or transitional justice, yet it does offer compelling insights into how this research agenda could be developed.

Two studies are of particular interest when thinking about how students use history to explain contemporary society. The first is Foster et al’s (Foster, 2008) widely-cited study which sought to investigate how UK students’ frameworks of the past are structured and employed. One interview question in particular was explicitly targeted to explore the ways in which students made reference to the past when thinking about the present and the future: “People say that the USA is the most powerful

country in the world. Will the USA always be the most powerful? How do you know?” One of the most significant findings was that of the 81 recorded temporal references to the question, 76% offered no explicit historical perspective. Indeed, the most common response was for students to assess the relative strength of the US in the contemporary world without drawing on any historical knowledge or understanding. Although some demonstrated an ability to connect the present and future, many students never left the present. The responses of only a small minority of students demonstrated a capacity to refer to the past to inform contemporary and future perspectives.

In the second part of Foster et al’s study, students were asked “Does history play any part in who you think you are?”. Of those students who responded, 77% believed that it did. However, detailed analysis of responses revealed that the majority of these students narrowly conceived their notion of history. Most students only drew on personal and family history when explaining how the past shaped their identity and others extended this perspective by separating broader historical influences from personal ones.

Duquette’s study (Duquette, 2015) similarly investigated how Canadian students used the past to understand the present – or what she described as “historical consciousness”. Duquette was interested in whether the way that students used the past to understand contemporary issues was related to their historical thinking skills. She tested this relationship by posing contemporary problems, e.g. international economic disparity, immigration, and voluntary enlistment in armed services. She then examined the ways in which students invoked history (or did not) in explaining these problems, both before and after explicit lessons in historical thinking. She found that students were indeed more likely to use history to explain contemporary problems after they had been taught historical thinking skills. To adopt the terminology of Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015), students were more likely to construct contemporary problems – or “outcomes” – as historical legacies after they were taught historical thinking.

These two studies suggest that the way that students use the past to reason about contemporary or future contexts is not necessarily determined by the historical content that they know. Rather, students’ use of

the past is an historical thinking skill. Indeed, as Duquette (Duquette, 2015) demonstrates, the likelihood of even constructing a contemporary problem as an historical legacy can be increased by teaching historical thinking skills.

However, the emphasis on historical thinking skills is contrasted by research conducted by Chana Teeger (Teeger, 2014). Although her focus is not on students, Teeger's work (Teeger, 2014) on how young South African professionals explain contemporary crime is a similar exploration of how people use the past; it presents a contemporary problem and analyzes whether history is included in participants' explanations. Yet rather than understanding the use of the past as relating to a disciplinary approach to history, Teeger explores the racial variation in how respondents organically introduce the country's apartheid past as an explanation for current crime. Her sociocultural approach therefore attends to whether, how, and by whom the past is mobilized as part of the explanation. Teeger's analysis, for example, suggested that while both Black and White interviewees highlighted present conditions as a cause of crime, Black respondents also proposed several ways in which current crime has its roots in the country's apartheid past. Notably, the study did not simply conclude that White South Africans lacked historical thinking skills since they were less likely to evoke the past.

Although Teeger (Teeger, 2014) does not seek to explain racial differences in the way South African's use the past, her work demonstrates the importance of a sociocultural approach in post-conflict societies where identity politics are particularly pronounced. It enjoys a productive tension with Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) and Duquette's (Duquette, 2015) studies, which have offered valuable disciplinary insight into the way that young people use the past. Indeed, as Foster et al (Foster et al, 2016) have acknowledged, while large-scale surveys have been profoundly informative, there is a particular benefit derived from standalone qualitative studies; research "that examines and critically considers the socially situated and context dependent way in which [historical] meaning... is made will be hugely beneficial to the field" (Foster, et al., 2016, p. 221). This dissertation draws inspiration from Teeger and seeks to develop Foster et al, and Duquette's approach in two important ways.

First, my research seeks to understand how and why students deploy the past by also considering the affective determinants which intersect with culture and identity. In line with Weiner's (Weiner, 2013) interest in how historical legacies are constructed differently according to political interest, my study would challenge the dominant position that causal reasoning is only a "skill", rather than also a tool which students use for the purposes of meaning making. The interest of this dissertation in how students derive meaning from the past is supported by an ethnographic approach which is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Second, my research seeks to investigate not only how students use the past to explain contemporary issues (starting in the present and working backwards), but also how students construct contemporary legacies of historical injustices (starting in the past and working forwards). I suggest that how students use a *particular* past – e.g. the apartheid past – is an important avenue of inquiry in contexts of historical injustice. This research would be interested not only in "how do teachers and students construct legacies of apartheid?" or "how is a contemporary problem explained by the past?" Rather, it connects the fields of history and history education by asking "do teachers and students construct apartheid legacies in ways that explain contemporary problems?" By developing Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) and Duquette's (Duquette, 2015) studies in this way I hope to contribute to scholarship which explores the role of legacy constructions in post-conflict history classrooms.

Part Three: History Classrooms

Several scholars have attempted a sociocultural approach to studying South African history education through classroom ethnographies. In this section I review previous studies which have touched upon the discussion of historical legacies in post-conflict history classrooms. These studies indicate that history classrooms are an important site where historical legacies are negotiated and constructed. I divide the review of this literature into studies which have offered a comparative lens between schools, and those

which have sought to explore how students learn. In making this distinction I demonstrate the need for studies which compare how students learn across different schools.

School comparisons

The first ethnography of post-apartheid South African history classrooms was conducted by Sarah Dryden (Dryden, 1999) in 1998. The research consisted of three weeks of observation and interviews with teachers and students in each of four schools within Cape Town. Her study sought to examine how history classes reflect how teachers and students dealt with an education system in transition. Perhaps the most apparent finding throughout Dryden's study is the intentionality with which teachers use history to explicitly change their students' values and perspectives. Teachers saw their purpose as helping students to understand how history shapes present-day reality.

Dryden notes that history teaching was heavily influenced by how teachers constructed contemporary legacies of apartheid. It was therefore diverse. For example, a White teacher that Dryden interviewed believed that apartheid legacies were unclear, and he questioned the notion of a single culpability; "You can't really say what did happen. You know, with the White and Black wars, who were the culprits? From the White side, then the Blacks were the culprits and then, from the other side, the Whites were the culprits... there is not one group that is wrong and the other were right" (Dryden, 1999, p.41). This statement suggests that he constructed a moral equality between the White minority and the Black majority and an implication that past injustices cannot explain current inequalities.

This contrasted with Black teachers, teaching in a disadvantaged, predominantly-Black school, who held historical discrimination directly responsible for current poverty. Teachers encouraged students to realize the injustice of their current situation, and empowered them to do something about it, even when the students themselves feel politically apathetic; "to show them that the New South Africa is in fact is

a legacy of what happened then and how it will actually affect them now” (Dryden, 1999, p.81). There was a strong emphasis on constructing causal connections.

Mazanderani, in a 2012 ethnography, similarly reports a Black teacher asking his all-Black class; “Do you ever wonder why we are all Black in this school? Why the school up the road is Coloured? Why the school in town is White? Segregation is still a big part of our lives... So you must understand this is because of apartheid, yes?” (Mazanderani, 2012, p. 34). Again, the approach to history teaching reflected teachers’ construction of the relationship between past and present.

Dryden furthermore observed how students brought their own understandings of historical legacies to class. At times this conflicted with the curriculum or their teachers’ views, resulting in discomfort, but since the negotiation of historical legacies was not the focus of Dryden’s study this was not explored. Instead, snap-shots of this discomfort are given; a Black student, for example, worried that “history makes people fight” because “we learnt that the Xhosas were caught by the British so that they could be slaves. So I think when I learnt that, I will be angry when I hear that, and then when I see you, I’ll think of that and I would want revenge to you” (Dryden, 1999, p. 52).

Naidu and Adonis’ (Naidu & Adonis, 2007) attitudinal survey similarly reported that students felt a detachment from the past, since stories of apartheid struggle were often connected with a sense of needing to be grateful for what they have today. They found that Black learners constructed the past as a source of oppression which had caused their parents and families much hardship and which placed a lot of pressure on the lives of these learners in the present. They tended to feel indebted to the apartheid struggle leaders.

Mazanderani (Mazanderani, 2012) observed that a different form of discomfort was present in a majority-White school. In this school students tended to place apartheid in an historic past that they saw as disconnected from (and therefore irrelevant to) their experience of the present. They wanted to avoid confrontation with this apartheid past, and were resentful towards teachers for the obligation to study it.

Instead, students gave an optimistic representation of life in the ‘new South Africa’ and a strong identification with themselves as a ‘born free generation’ (McKinney, 2007, p. 166). Mackie (Mackie, 2007) similarly observed that by labelling the past as ‘boring’ or ‘a waste of time’, White learners suggested that they did not feel connected with representations of South Africa’s past; that is, as something which needs to be corrected, redressed, rewritten. These learners felt that they were being punished for legacies not of their own creation.

These observations of diverse legacy constructions at play in the history classroom setting point to the value of historical legacies as a framework to understand how history education happens. They suggest that race and class may influence the construction of historical legacies, and that a variety of constructed legacies are being shared that are outside the scope of the curriculum. This is an important consideration and poses the question of whether diverse and racialized legacy constructions may serve to undermine transitional justice.

However one of the limitations of Dryden and Mazanderani’s studies is that they do not look at the ways that students’ constructions of apartheid legacies change in negotiation with what happens in the classroom. They therefore do not address the central assumption of history education for transitional justice; that what students experience in a classroom will change their perspective, and hopefully in a way that will contribute to greater justice and social cohesion.

How students learn historical legacies

Teeger (Teeger, 2015), in an ethnographic study of two mixed-race schools in Johannesburg, does examine this learning dynamic and the micro-interactional processes of socialization. In research that most closely mirrors this dissertation, Teeger not only interviews teachers and students separately, but also observes how they interact over contentious historical issues. Her central finding was that teachers actively sought to prevent students from constructing contemporary South African society as a legacy

of the apartheid past. Black students in particular were discouraged from causally connecting their current poverty with historical injustice. She reports a White teacher as saying, “If [the apartheid section] is not taught correctly, it can lead to more division because you can have that whole idea of ‘But that’s how much we suffered’ and ‘I should get this’. But if it’s taught correctly it should not do that; it should do the opposite” (Teeger, 2015, p. 1192).

“Teaching correctly” involved emphasizing that “both sides” (Black and White) had good and bad elements; that Black people were also racist; that none of the students should feel guilty or uncomfortable when learning about apartheid; and that White people also suffered under apartheid. While this approach did not appear in national curricular guidelines, all teachers introduced this narrative into their teaching. Teachers improvised on official curricular guidelines to solve micro-interactional dilemmas emerging from the content of the official curriculum. These dilemmas included minimizing conflict in their classrooms, maintaining their position as authority figures in mixed-race schools, and assuaging students’ feelings of guilt and anger.

Teeger (2015) observed how students internalized the message that many Whites were victimized by or resisted the apartheid regime. For example, students were three times more likely to mention that not all Whites supported the apartheid system after they had been exposed to the apartheid section in school than beforehand. The study therefore offers evidence of how teachers and schools shape the way that students construct contemporary legacies of historical injustices.

Teeger’s research is part of a larger body of ethnographic studies outside of South Africa which demonstrate the ways in which young people are taught – intentionally or not – to ignore historical legacies. In John Wills’ (Wills, 1996) study of Californian history classrooms, for example, he describes how students failed to construct a connection between slavery and discussions of contemporary racial inequality in the USA, even after an extensive study of the history of slavery. Despite the best efforts of a progressive teacher who saw the purpose of history education as enabling students to understand the

causes of the present, students attributed Black poverty to Black peoples' unwillingness to look for work. When students did try to use the past to explain the present, they described Black poverty as a result of Black peoples' distressing memories about slavery.

Wills argues that this disconnect could be attributed to the structure of the curriculum. An unintended consequence of focusing on the experiences of slaves during the Civil War is that students' historical understandings of the experiences of African-Americans with regards to racism, discrimination, and injustice become anchored in slavery. The students viewed slavery as an historically specific problem that has been solved rather than one example in a continuous history marked by racism and discrimination toward African-Americans in US society.

Kitson and McCully (Kitson & McCully, 2005), in their study on history teaching and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, similarly demonstrated that teachers were not making connections between the past and present. They speculated that this was due to a fear of emotional responses from parents. Kitson and McCully also found that the history textbooks rarely made attempts to link the past and the present explicitly. Out of seven textbooks written after 1991 for a Northern Irish audience, covering aspects of Irish history between 1500 and 1922, there were only three attempts to link the past explicitly with the present. There therefore appeared to be a systematic attempt to prevent students from constructing historical legacies of the Northern Irish Troubles.

A review of these post-conflict history classroom ethnographies demonstrates, as Weiner suggested, that historical legacies are deeply political. Teachers and curriculum actively try to shape how students interpret the causes of contemporary phenomena, often seeking to disconnect the "outcome" and "antecedent" (Wittenberg, 2015) to avoid interpersonal tension. In line with what Foster et al (Foster et al., 2008) observed, students were successfully learning not to use the past to explain contemporary problems.

However what these ethnographies don't address – and where my dissertation hopes to make a contribution – is a comparative study of how different historical legacies are constructed among different groups of students. Dryden (Dryden, 1999) and Mazanderani (Mazanderani, 2012) indicated that apartheid legacies were being constructed differently in different schools. How then are students responding to and developing these different legacy constructions?

Unfortunately, Teegeer's study was not comparative between different types of schools. There was therefore little evidence for how the cultural identities of the teachers, students, and the schools themselves interacted with the ways in which they discussed and constructed legacies of apartheid. By selecting four racially-different schools, my dissertation hopes to explore how students and teachers of different race and class backgrounds learn to construct causal historical legacies of the apartheid past, and in doing so use the past to interpret contemporary South African society. This research will therefore represent an important contribution to scholarship on transitional justice and history education, which has increasingly become interested in how historical legacies are constructed in post-conflict societies.

Conclusion

My review of the literature has demonstrated that scholars in the field of transitional justice recognize the need for an increased focus on historical legacies. Although historical legacies have typically been the purview of historians, the classroom focus on causal reasoning and “usable historical pasts” is a valuable way in which history education researchers have addressed connections between past and present. I suggest that by understanding these connections as tools for making sense of contemporary society, I open up an important avenue of research for the role of history education in transitional justice. This is an unexplored gap at the intersection of socio-cultural and disciplinary debates regarding history education in post-conflict societies.

The theories and debates outlined in this chapter inform the empirical heart of this dissertation: an ethnography of four South African history classrooms, which explores how students learn to construct and use historical legacies for the purposes of understanding contemporary society and their place within it.

I now turn to Chapter 3 which offers context for the South African history classroom, and then Chapter 4 where I outline the methodological approach to this study.

Chapter 3

South African Context

Introduction

This dissertation explores how Grade 9 students in South Africa learn to construct historical legacies in their history classrooms. As discussed in the previous chapter, I suggest that understanding how history education contributes to young peoples' construction of historical legacies is important for the field of transitional justice. To date there have been no comparative studies of how young South Africans learn to construct apartheid legacies.

This study is situated within the context of four South African history classrooms. In order to understand the classroom cultures, this chapter aims to contextualize the South African history classroom. In Part One I give a brief overview of apartheid laws, and then discuss transitional justice in South Africa. In Part Two I trace the development of the contemporary history curriculum, starting with Bantu Education in the 1950s. In Part Three I outline the demographic and financial considerations of the schooling system and teacher training. This contextualization forms a foundation for the empirical chapters that will follow.

Part One: Transitional Justice in South Africa

South Africa under apartheid was divided along complex intersections of race and ethnicity. As a system, apartheid grew out of three hundred years of colonial dominance which entrenched oppressive social structures divided along constructions of race, gender, and class. In 1948, the newly-elected National Party government elaborately codified these social structures, intensifying the systematizing of

oppression and racial discrimination. They were elected ten more times by the uniformly-White electorate, largely on the basis of their apartheid policies.

Apartheid legislation was extensive, and changed throughout the four decades of National Party rule. However a number of apartheid laws had an outsized impact on the lives of South Africans. The Population Registration Act, for example, required that every South African be classified according to a population group. The Separate Amenities Act meant that public spaces and services were segregated by race. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act forbade people from marrying those from a different racial group. The Group Areas act divided urban areas according to population groups. As will be discussed below, the Bantu Education Act - of particular relevance for this dissertation - established separate education systems for different racial populations.

Much of this legislation was disbanded in the late 1980s, followed by the release of Nelson Mandela in 1991, and the end of apartheid. In 1994 South Africa held its first democratic elections, in which the African National Congress garnered the majority of votes. However, the newly-elected government faced multiple challenges. According to Weldon, they “inherited a traumatized country of racial inequality, racialized identities, and deeply-ingrained attitudes of superiority and inferiority; a country in which privilege and power had been racialized” (Weldon, 2009, p. 121). Addressing these inequities and outright abuses became the focus of post-apartheid governance. Within the first year of democracy, South Africa established a pioneering Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The TRC, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, sought to promote national unity and reconciliation. Hearings were used to investigate the causes, nature, and extent of gross human rights violations that occurred during specific periods in the apartheid era. In return for disclosing the whole truth of their political crimes, perpetrators were granted amnesty. By implication, ‘truth’ was seen as important for achieving reconciliation as well as nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa. The TRC made possible a public understanding of the past by way of testimonies of individual people who, through their

own recalled memory, contributed to “the production of a shared national history... understood to be an integral part of the new nation-building project” (Posel and Simpson, 2002, p.2).

“Truth telling” also played a role in South Africa’s transitional justice journey among those who heard these memories. In a move that was considered radical at the time, the testimonies of both the victims and the perpetrators were broadcast nationally and internationally, making it impossible even for White South Africans to deny the horrors of the very recent past. This was significant, not only because psychologically it was important that South Africans should begin to engage with the traumatic legacies of apartheid, but also because it began a very public political process of constructing a “foundation myth” or official narrative. It established a united history upon which the new democratic nation could be built. According to Weldon the TRC did not prevent denial among White South Africans; merely that it “reduced the number of lies that could be circulated unchallenged in public discourse” (Weldon, 2009, p. 264).

The TRC thus embodied South Africa as the ‘Rainbow Nation’ and provided an essential step towards social cohesion and the remaking of South African identity as inclusive of diversity of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and ability, in direct opposition to the divisionist, racist politics of apartheid. Importantly, the TRC indicated the deep wounds inflicted by apartheid, and argued that the separation of development along racial, ethnic, and gender lines constitutes a violation of human rights. It also made a series of recommendations for how to address these violations. Of interest to this dissertation, a number of these recommendations concerned education. For example, the final TRC report recommended that “human rights curricula be introduced into formal education”, and must address “racism, gender discrimination, conflict resolution, and the rights of children” (TRC Final report, Vol.5, 1998, p. 311).

However, the TRC was itself a product of compromise at a number of levels. Not only did the amnesty provisions prevent the alienation of the Security Forces, but focusing on the main perpetrators - though

not the apartheid leadership - moved the attention away from the complicity of the majority of White South Africans. Regarded in the light of reconciliation, being able to put aside personal feelings of guilt enabled more White South Africans to feel reasonably comfortable with a government that had a Black majority. This has led several scholars to argue that the TRC created an artificial sense of rupture between the past and present. According to Teeger (Teeger, 2014), the TRC failed to adequately examine and address aspects of the past that have left their remnants in the present (see for example Posel & Simpson 2002; Wilson 2001).

This distinction - outlined by scholars such as Teeger (Teeger, 2014) and Posel and Simpson (Posel & Simpson, 2002) - between a united understanding of history but a divided understanding of historical legacies lies at the heart of this dissertation. While the TRC may have successfully established a common memory of the “truth” of apartheid, legacies of apartheid do not enjoy such consensus. While data are limited, there is reason to believe that there are very diverse and racialized constructions of apartheid legacies. A study cited by Swartz (Swartz, 2017) for example found that South Africans have racially-different beliefs regarding contemporary legacies of apartheid; only 33% of White South Africans agreed with the statement, ‘Many Black South Africans are poor today as a result of apartheid’s legacy’, compared to 77% of Black South Africans, 67% of Indian South Africans, and 59% of Coloured¹ South Africans. These extraordinary differences furthermore suggest that there is little consensus in South Africa regarding the causes of poverty.

This divided understanding poses a challenge for creating a shared national agenda since beliefs concerning apartheid legacies shape many of the defining questions that South Africa faces. The issue of land restitution for example was a central policy focus in the 2019 national elections, and questions regarding affirmative action, reparations, gang violence, social spending, and responses to government corruption are also debated and contested on the grounds of historical legacies. Such a racialized

¹ A multi-racial ethnic group that claim a distinct identity and were labelled as such by the apartheid government.

difference in the perspectives on historic injustice and its legacies are likely to contribute to significant divides over public policy (Barton and Levstik, 2004).

Part Two: History Education

History education in South Africa has undergone multiple iterations. In this section I review some of the developments of the history curriculum. I look briefly at the history curriculum under apartheid (Bantu education), before tracing the development of the post-apartheid history curricula.

Bantu Education

The major provision of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 was enforcing racially-separate educational facilities. It is often argued that the policy of Bantu education was aimed to direct Black or non-White youth to the unskilled labor market. Hendrik Verwoerd – at the time Minister of Native Affairs – claimed that the aim was to solve South Africa’s “ethnic problems” by creating complementary economic and political units for different ethnic groups. He stated that,

“There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?” (Quoted in ‘Apartheid: A history’ (Lapping, 1986, p. 109))

Interestingly, the introduction of Bantu Education led to a substantial increase of government funding to the learning institutions of Black South Africans. Education was seen as an extension of state control, and curricula were used to reinforce and normalize unequal race relations. This mechanism of control however, required Black South Africans to be in school. The Bantu Education Act gave the National Party the power to employ and train teachers as they saw fit. While the act did not stipulate lesser standards of education for non-White South Africans, it did legislate for the establishment of an advisory board to do so, and it did direct the minister to do so.

Schools teaching non-Whites received a fraction of the government expenditures that were given to White schools. In 1946, seven years before the introduction of the Bantu education policy, the government was paying more than 20 times per capita for White education as for Black (Maharaj, 2000; Thompson, 1990). This ratio did decline over time, although it never reached parity; By 1975, this had changed to a 15-to-1 ratio, and dropped to 4-to-1 by 1989 (Christie, 1991; Thomas, 1996). Consequently, Black schools were much more crowded than those attended by Whites, and the physical resources significantly worse (Case & Yogo, 1999; Mncwabe, 1993).

Teacher education during this time was also fragmented. Teacher education colleges were designated for each racial group, and entrance requirements were not uniform for all institutions. Schafer and Wilmot (Schafer & Wilmot, 2012, p. 42) claimed that White pre-service teacher education was far superior to the Indian, Coloured, and Black counterparts due to the relative ease with which White students could attain a university education. It is further reported that many Black students were qualified as “teachers with Standard 8 leaving certificates” (Sayed, et al., 2017, p. 228), as opposed to attending a college of teacher education or university. Finally, the content taught at different institutions did not necessarily include all subjects. Sayed claimed that “most of the graduates from Black teacher-training colleges were trained in subjects such as religious studies and history” (Sayed, 2002, p. 382) and were underdeveloped in areas of mathematics, science, and technology. Black teachers in teacher education colleges were expected to achieve the minimum levels of literacy and numeracy, with low-budget primary schooling provided by Black women. White teachers - with the advantage of secondary schooling - were educated in post-secondary school colleges of education (Chisholm, 2012).

During this time there was no national core curriculum, thus allowing the application of differentiated learning. White learners were taught subjects that led towards higher education and superior skills and leadership roles in society. Black learners, on the other hand, were taught subjects such as indigenous languages, biblical studies, and agriculture. Mathematics and science were discouraged for Black learners, either through a lack of teachers and facilities, or through claims that Black learners did not

have the competence to succeed. Mokubung Nkomo (Nkomo, 1990) has further contended that the hidden curriculum socialized learners so that they accepted apartheid social relations as natural, and forged a consciousness and identity that constructed Whites as superior to Blacks.

History education under apartheid was particularly highly politicized, not only in its reflection of the Afrikaner nationalist zeitgeist, but also in the revisionist history that was taught as a form of tacit resistance² (Kalloway, 1995). The South African curriculum under apartheid strongly overlapped nation with race (Weldon, 2009). History was offered in a way that justified Afrikaner domination and Afrikaner struggles for self-determination. That heroic struggle for survival – and the need to neutralize the threat of other races – formed the core of the South African history curriculum (Engelbrecht, 2006).

Post-Apartheid Development

In the post-1994 period, curriculum reforms were introduced as part of the project of reimagining ‘the country from a racially-divided nation to a diverse-but-united, non-racial nation’ (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013, p. 33). In 1994, South Africa’s first non-racial government launched a national process to purge the apartheid curriculum of its racist content. In some instances, this simply involved blotting out problematic sections. However, in the immediate years after apartheid was demolished, the use of former, biased history textbooks remained in use, especially in the most disadvantaged classrooms (Engelbrecht, 2006). Furthermore, curriculum reforms were severely curtailed by the constitutional and bureaucratic constraints of political transition, with ‘balance of forces’ supporting the apartheid curriculum (Jansen & Christie, 1999, p. 290).

² Peter Kalloway (1995) provides an excellent description of history teaching in the 1960s as a form of resistance to apartheid. He describes how the textbooks and curricula at that time “provided the ideal context for teaching critical history in the oppositional mode” (Kalloway, 1995, p.11). He states that “even in the dark days of apartheid, it was possible in some contexts for White teachers in middle-class schools to use the code to break the code - to tackle the essential issue of the partialness of knowledge and the fragility of our interpretations” (Kalloway, 1995, p.11).

Since that time the South African history curriculum has undergone three iterations; Curriculum 2005 (or Outcomes Based Education), the Revised National Curriculum Statements, and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. In this section I chart the development of these curricula and their aims. For the purposes of this dissertation it is interesting to note that none of these iterations have sought to address apartheid legacies.

Curriculum 2005

Curriculum 2005 or Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was launched in 1997. It marked a significant break from the apartheid curriculum by shifting the emphasis to outcomes, learner-centeredness and active learning. Teachers were given extensive freedoms – though little guidance – in curricular matters (Stoffels, 2008); so long as they achieved certain “outcomes” they had control over what they taught. According to Weldon, the decision made at this time was to ‘forget’ rather than to ‘remember’ the past. Subjects were replaced with “Learning Areas”, none of which included history. Indeed, the structure of OBE allowed teachers to use their own historical narratives as long as students met the competency criteria. Although politically expedient in an era marked by post-conflict compromise, this open curricula structure did not prevent the glorification of a narrow Afrikaner nationalism or a militant ethnic African nationalism.

The vision for the future implied in Curriculum 2005 was economic: to create a “prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice” (Department of Education, 2002, p. 4). As Weldon (Weldon, 2010) argued, this desire to forget was not unusual in countries emerging from conflict, particularly given the depth of trauma that was exposed by the TRC.

Furthermore, the memory of school history under the Christian Nationalist Education curriculum made many skeptical that history could be anything other than a tool for ideological division. In recognizing the deeply insidious way in which history education during apartheid reinforced the unequal relations of

power, Weldon (Weldon, 2010) suggests that a complete rejection of history education might have seemed the only reasonable way of decolonizing minds. There were certainly those located in the struggle against apartheid who felt such a “deep aversion” to the manipulation of history and history textbooks during apartheid that history education was “symbolic of apartheid; removing history was removing apartheid” (Chisholm, 2004).

The Revised National Curriculum Statements

The new Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, reversed the “collective amnesia” (Wassermann, 2018, p. 62) when he launched a curriculum revision in 2000. For Asmal, education was more than a strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction: it was intrinsic to the development and support of democracy. To him, ethical remembrance within history education was a critical part of building democracy (Asmal K. , 2007). The Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS), which emerged in 2002, were infused with issues of human rights and social and environmental justice. This is best exemplified in the introduction to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002) which states:

“The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development, but also to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education. [We want to develop] learners who will be inspired by these values, and who will act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice.”

The RNCS also brought back a much stronger subject base into the learning areas. The Social Sciences working group was given a directive to make a clear distinction between History and Geography, and to highlight issues of social and environmental justice. From being a ‘non-subject’ in Curriculum 2005, History in the RNCS was allocated a particular role as a vehicle for human rights education and democracy. The Report of the Working Group on Values in Education stated that “the teaching of history is central to the promotion of all human values... History is one of the many memory systems that shape

our values and morality” (James, et al., 2000, p. 5). History was also considered to be central to the construction of a national identity, the building of a collective memory based on the recognition of past histories, and to the development of a critically-responsible citizenry, ready to participate in a democracy at all levels.

According to Weldon, the RNCS did not, as in so many other post-conflict societies, replace one national narrative with another. What was created was an official history which aimed “at permitting the unofficial, the hidden, to become visible” (Chisholm, 2004, p. 188). Within the new curriculum, Weldon argues, there was no attempt to delineate a 'true' history. Rather the new 'official history' - through a commitment to the idea of historical 'truth' - could be subjected to rigorous analysis by entering conversations structured by the 'disciplinary traditions'. The aim was to recognize that there were complex histories within the South African experience, and to create an 'open' rather than a 'closed' text (Weldon, 2009, p. 180).

Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements

For pedagogical reasons, best outlined by Jonathan Jansen and Pam Christie (Jansen & Christie, 1999), the Curriculum 2005 and RNCS were eventually disbanded. Since so much responsibility was laid on the shoulders of teachers to develop their own curriculum, standardized testing indicated that education inequality was increasing in South Africa during this time. Well-resourced schools and experienced teachers developed curricula that met the “outcomes” with ease, while others struggled and fell behind.

RNCS was replaced by the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). This is the curriculum currently used in South Africa. It was designed to provide the curricular structure and lesson plans that teachers required, and enforces a strict, weekly time adherence to specified content. CAPS seeks to construct learners who can “identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking” (Department of Education, 2002, p. 5). According to Sayed et al (Sayed et al., 2017), the emphasis of this curriculum is on the range of intellectual and social skills that the student should

develop. The learner is constructed as an individual, putting the onus of responsible citizenship on citizens. The commitment to values is limited to a rights discourse (Grussendorf, Booyse, & Burroughs, 2014), which according to Sayed et al (Sayed et al., 2017) is unlikely to achieve a substantial impact on transitional justice in South Africa.

Within this curriculum, History - which is part of Social Sciences - is expected to support citizenship within a democratic society by ‘encouraging the values of the South African Constitution’; ‘encouraging civic responsibility and responsible leadership’; and ‘promoting human rights and peace by challenging prejudices involving race, class, gender, ethnicity and xenophobia’ (DBE, 2011, p. 9). It is compulsory until Grade 9, however is not formally assessed until after Grade 9. While the curriculum is therefore highly prescribed, it is rarely enforced.

History is unsurprisingly the main subject for teaching about apartheid. Apartheid is taught both in Grade 9³, and then again in Grade 12. Creating more fixed lesson plans necessarily results in a more fixed national historical narrative, which proves a radical departure from RNCS. This is especially true in terms of how apartheid was treated. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011, p. 43) “some of the key turning-points in South African history, including the coming of apartheid in 1948 and non-violent resistance to apartheid in the 1950s” are a key focus for developing students’ understanding about the impact of apartheid on people’s lives. The curricula effectively provide a “blow by blow” account of what transpired in South Africa from the 1960s up to the post-1994 TRC (Wassermann, 2018). This, as has been argued, could be construed to be a legal and constitutional history blended with political science (Kallaway, 2012) that leaves learners and teachers with a broad overview of apartheid in South Africa from its origins up to its demise.

There are a range of history textbooks which the South African Department of Basic Education have approved for school purchase. Sayed et al’s (Sayed et al., 2017) analysis of the most widely-used South

³ The full Grade 9 history curriculum can be found in Appendix 2.

African Grade 9 Social Science textbook⁴ (Ranby & Johannesson, 2013) is a valuable insight into how the history of apartheid is presented in the curriculum since it reflects the curriculum guidelines related to apartheid. Chapters 3 and 4 of this textbook relate to apartheid.

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the key turning-points in South African history, including the dawn of apartheid in 1948, and non-violent resistance to apartheid in the 1950s. The chapter situates the history of apartheid by discussing how the Declaration of Human Rights is applied to South Africa and illustrates the social construction of race in the South African context⁵. It traces racism from racial segregation prior to apartheid, including the Natives Land Act of 1913, through to its metamorphosis into apartheid. This is done through examples and a case study on the Bantustans. The last section of the chapter is centered on non-violent resistance to apartheid, with a particular focus on the ANC Program of Action, the Freedom Charter, the Treason Trial, and the Women's March (Sayed et al. 2017). In short, the chapter illustrates the systemic ways that social injustice was perpetuated.

Chapter 4 then highlights further turning points in the history of apartheid and the resistance to apartheid. These include the Sharpeville massacre, the Langa march, the Soweto uprising, and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. The chapter narrates the story of the long struggle against apartheid and the ways in which global, political, and economic factors led to a negotiated settlement, paving the way for a democratic system of government in South Africa (Sayed et al. 2017).

According to Wassermann (Wassermann, 2018), the ANC-led government has been successful in using CAPS to create a new official master narrative and hence a new official memory, based on an imagined new nationalism and identity. This was achieved by downplaying the true horrors of apartheid, attributing a messianic status to Mandela, foregrounding how South Africa became a democracy in 1994 under the ANC, and presenting a neat history without any real villains but clear heroes. The result is an

⁴ All schools in this study's sample used the Pearson Grade 9 Social Science textbook during history lessons.

⁵ Notably, no Coloured history is included in these chapters.

intended uncontroversial history of apartheid. Wassermann (Wassermann, 2018) argues that the greatest benefactors of this new master narrative were those who perpetuated apartheid. For the sake of nation-building and reconciliation the role of the perpetrators was watered down and placed in a global context of racism and colonialism.

Sayed et al (Sayed, et al., 2017) agree with Wassermann's (Wassermann, 2018) critique of the CAPS curriculum and emphasizes its silences. They argue that the imagination of the 'rainbow nation' is constructed through exclusions and stereotypes and without sufficient reference to the huge inequalities based on race, class, and gender in contemporary South Africa. The Pearson textbook for example, presents colonialism only as a form of economic exploitation and ignores the socio-cultural and political inequalities that it normalized. Furthermore, it fails to encourage students to reflect on the ways their experiences are shaped by processes of colonialism. The construction and maintenance of apartheid is shown to be linked to only 'bad' White individuals, exonerating White people from the responsibility of human rights abuses, and silencing the perspective of ordinary White people (Sayed et al. 2017). Furthermore, Sayed et al (Sayed, et al., 2017) argue that the end of apartheid and the transition to non-racial democratic rule is celebrated in ways that give the impression that racism, discrimination, poverty, inequities, and violence also came to an end in 1994.

The broader criticism of the CAPS curriculum is often expressed as a frustration at how little students know about South African history. For example, Thami Makhanya, a South African judge, claimed that "the problem is that the youth of today do not know where they come from... Nelson Mandela is still fresh in his grave yet some ignorant young say that the past of the country did not affect them" (Makhanya, 2014). The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) similarly complained that the "born frees" who claimed that they were not affected by apartheid did not understand the structural roots of apartheid still visible in South Africa (SADTU, 2014). Perhaps this is not surprising, given that the CAPS curriculum does not require students to reflect on legacies of the past; on how it affects them and their society.

In response to these criticisms, a report by the History Ministerial Task Team for the Department of Basic Education (Ndlovu, et al., 2018) has recommended that history education be made compulsory until Grade 12⁶. In reference to the discussions on truth-telling and transitional justice (see Chapter 2) I suggest that this is an incorrect response. As extensive literature has shown, “truth-telling” about past injustices has the potential to “neutralize” those injustices if presented in a way that does not draw attention to their contemporary legacies. South Africa does not need more history, but rather a history that addresses the contemporary legacies of the past.

Part Three: Schools and Teachers

Schools

After 1994, the ANC government paid significant attention to education reform, specifically with regard to addressing historical disparities in resources. It introduced the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF), which remains the central instrument for redistributing resources to date.

Within South Africa, schools are divided into quintiles which are used to determine funding. Each school is allocated funding according to a set of per-learner allocations applicable to each quintile. Schools in Q1, Q2, and Q3 are no-fee schools, while schools in Q4 and Q5 are allowed to supplement their funding from the government by charging school fees. The higher the school fees that are charged, the less government funding is allocated to that school. Thus South Africa is in the unusual position of having many government schools which charge fees higher than those charged by private schools.

Despite the apparent ‘pro-poor’ redistributive mechanism, the education budget remains very limited, with an over-dependence on private expenditure in education. School fees are most frequently used to

⁶ This is even though the numbers of students choosing to study History until Grade 12 is steadily increasing. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the increased uptake in History is because it is seen as an easier subject than mathematics or science.

pay for extra teaching staff. This means that fee-paying schools often have smaller class sizes and a wider range of subject choices. Sayed et al (Sayed et al., 2017) argue that this education inequality has precarious implications for social cohesion, since wealthier students have substantially better education opportunities. Furthermore, given that the budgetary process only categorizes schools in terms of level of community poverty and does not look at the actual learners in schools, little is known about what the quintile system means for the actual financial experiences of school actors. What is clear is that the higher the quintile, the higher the academic performance of the school.

Intersecting with this fee structure are school catchment areas or “feeder zones”. South African children are offered priority in enrolment to the government school closest to their home. Only once all children within the school “feeder zone” have been offered a place, can the school accept enrolments from other locations. Feeder zones increase house prices near high-performing schools, and concentrate wealth in these neighborhoods. Government schools are not permitted to expel a student for failure to pay fees if the parent can demonstrate that the fees are unaffordable to them. This means that when given a choice schools prefer to enroll students who have a demonstrated ability to pay school fees. Since urban areas in South Africa are racially segregated, schools also tend to be racially segregated. The more expensive the school, the more White students it tends to have, and the more racially integrated it tends to be. However, the majority of South African students are Black, and are therefore educated in racially-homogenous schools.

Some question the value of giving Quintile 4 and 5 schools any government funding at all, since it subsidizes the education of the most wealthy. Early in South Africa’s democratic transition the decision was made to try and prevent a two-tiered system where the wealthy (mostly White) were educated solely in private institutions, while the poor (mostly Black) were educated solely in government institutions. By maintaining the coherence of the government schooling system, the South African government ensured that almost all students would study the same curriculum. However, schools can choose which

subjects to offer after Grade 9, and some schools chose not to offer History on the grounds of ideological differences.

While all students in South Africa have the right to learn in one of the 11 national languages, the majority of South African secondary schools opt to use English as their medium of instruction. Evidence (Maluleke, 2019) suggests that, in many schools, teachers code-switch, and use more than one language during instruction time. This is particularly true in racially-homogenous schools. Perhaps this is representative of the larger challenge within South African schools; the need to respect and support local cultural identities, without compromising on inclusion or quality.

Teachers

In South Africa, teaching is a graduate profession. Initial teacher education is provided through 22 public universities, distributed across South Africa's nine provinces. It is offered either as a Bachelors of Education (B.Ed.) or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). There are no national curricula for teacher education. However, all teacher-training providers are integrated into universities which adhere to a common policy framework for teacher training (Soudien & Sayed, 2019).

According to Sayed et al (Sayed et al., 2017) the common policy framework has not provided sufficient guidance to providers as to how they should structure their programs. Predictably, there is great variation in institutional approaches. This has resulted in variation with regard to students' subject competence and exposure to classroom and school realities (CDE, 2015). A 2017 study by Sayed et al developed case studies of three PGCE history programs in South Africa. The study demonstrated how both institutional cultures, and teacher educator attitudes, significantly influenced the form and substance of the state's teacher training policy intentions. It furthermore found that PGCE graduates were likely to seek teaching jobs in schools with the same racial identity as the ones they attended as students.

Many scholars (Roodt, 2018; Soudien & Sayed, 2019; Taylor, Robinson, & Hofmeyr, 2017) point to a quality, recruitment, and retention crisis among South African teachers. Soudien and Sayed for example, report that “teacher education as a sector has struggled to produce teachers able to deliver a quality education experience for South African learners” (Soudien & Sayed, 2019, p. 1). It is an undesirable career, requiring low entry scores, and pursued by those with few other academic choices. Teaching in South Africa shows a significant early-career attrition rate – 80% of contract terminations in the 25-to-34 age category result from resignations (Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Research has attributed this to limited preparation for the realities of teaching. In a large number of schools these challenges include violence (between learners, between teachers, and between teachers and learners), lack of resources and infrastructure, large class sizes, and a high administrative load (deClercq, 2010; Sayed, 2017).

The realities of teaching are arguably most difficult for history teachers. Almost all history teachers in South Africa have lived through the apartheid history that they teach. Concerningly, many were trained to be history teachers within the apartheid system, at a time when very few Black teachers were university-educated, and the dominant teaching method cultivated was that of rote learning (Soudien & Sayed, 2019). According to Weldon (Weldon, 2010) little consideration has been given to the potential traumatization of teachers. A number of NGOs have sought to offer Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to teachers with the aim of helping them to navigate this history. Shikaya, for example, is an NGO that brings diverse groups of teachers together to talk about their own identities and experiences of apartheid, and to discuss how this impacts their teaching practice.

The challenging circumstances of many South African schools, coupled with the limitations of teacher training and the difficulty of teaching apartheid history, are important contextual considerations for the empirical chapters that follow.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to outline some of the contextual factors that will help to frame the empirical work of this dissertation, and assist the reader in its interpretation. In particular, I draw the reader's attention to two points: The absence of legacy thinking in the South African history curriculum, and the ways in which schools in South Africa reproduce distinct racial identities.

I now turn to Chapter Four, which details the methodological approach to this research.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This research develops an understanding of the different ways in which Grade 9 students in Cape Town, South Africa negotiate and construct legacies of apartheid in four history classrooms. The research furthermore outlines the factors that mediate the construction of legacies, and how certain legacy constructions come to assume dominance within classroom cultures.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the interest in how students construct historical legacies stems from a body of literature which suggests that the ways in which individuals think about legacies of the past is important for transitional justice and truth-telling, since it shapes contemporary decision-making and attitudes. This research is therefore driven by two conceptual agendas. The first is the theoretical contribution it makes regarding the relationship between legacy constructions and transitional justice in highly diverse post-conflict societies. The second is the way in which historical legacies are constructed in the context of formal education. In particular, I problematize a) the portrayal of historical legacies as being “self-evident” and “abstract” (Stoler, 2016) relationships between past and present which can simply be learned; and b) the portrayal of legacy thinking as an historical thinking *skill*, rather than a negotiation in relation to contemporary identities.

The research design can best be described as four comparative ethnographic case studies, employing classroom observations, focus groups, and interviews with both teachers and students. The unit of analysis in this study is the Grade 9 history class itself, in the context of their history classroom. I observed every history lesson that one Grade 9 class in each school participated in over the course of

nine months. In doing so I hoped to shed light on how different groups of South Africans developed very different constructions of apartheid legacies.

My study focuses on the 9th grade where, for the first time, South African students across the country learn about apartheid in a “formal and systematic way through the education system” (Teeger, 2015, p. 1176). For students who drop history at the end of the 9th grade, when it ceases to be mandatory, this may be the last time they learn history in a formal educational context. Grade 9 classes are therefore not a self-selecting group of students who have opted to study history. It is perhaps one of the few contexts in contemporary South Africa where racially diverse groups of people routinely meet to think systematically about their past.

The Grade 9 South African history curriculum (see Appendix 2) is centralized. It includes a module on life under apartheid, and a module on resistance to apartheid. It was therefore relevant to the question of how legacies of apartheid are constructed. Cape Town was chosen because it is the city in South Africa where I had the strongest personal networks and the greatest familiarity. It is also a South African city with a particularly high level of racial segregation, and where English is the medium of instruction in schools.

By focusing on young people age 14-to-15, this study researches an age range within which “lessons learned about ‘us’ and ‘them’ – and history and politics more generally – are expected to be highly salient” (Teeger, 2015, p. 1183), and “remain disproportionately influential throughout the life course” (Teeger, 2015, p. 1183). This study highlights the importance of understanding how students construct legacies of the past and their contemporary effects during this crucial developmental period.

The structure of this chapter is divided into three parts. In Part One I will unpack some of the broader theoretical and political considerations of the research design and methodological approach. In particular Part One will address the decision to adopt an ethnographic approach, selecting case studies, and my own positionality within the research. In Part Two I will describe some of the more practical aspects of

the research methodology, including gaining access to the schools, and conducting observations and interviews. In Part Three I explain my approach to analyzing the data.

Part One: Theoretical Considerations and Justifications

The methods employed in this study reflect a theoretical understanding regarding the nature of what is being researched. In seeking to answer a question – namely, how South African students develop different historical legacies in the Grade 9 history classroom – the focus of this research is not on given events, or descriptions of those events. Rather it is on a particular theoretical idea – the importance of historical legacies for transitional justice – and those aspects of any events whose investigation might facilitate the development of this idea (Hammersley, 1985). All methodological decisions have been taken with this in mind.

Selecting case studies

Ethnographic research is often criticized for its failure to use statistical sampling techniques in selecting cases for study (Hammersley, 2007). The four schools chosen for this study are not meant to be representative of all schools in South Africa. Instead of using the logic of statistical sampling – which, as Small (Small, 2009) argues, is not the most fruitful way of conceptualizing this kind of research – I sampled on theoretical grounds (Yin, 2003), with the aim of furthering a theoretical understanding of how different groups of people can come to develop different legacy thinking. Schools, or ‘case studies’ were therefore selected to support the theoretical aims of the research, rather than to make broader generalizations about history education in South Africa.

The purpose of embarking on multiple case studies was so that I could compare and contrast between different experiences of history education within the same city, and thus better understand the influence or relationship between the ideas that students bring to the classroom, the ideas that they are presented

with by the teacher, and the legacy thinking that develops over the course of an academic year. I chose four classrooms since this gave me sufficient data to make meaningful comparisons, while also allowing an in-depth ethnographic study of each classroom to be feasible.

There are two levels of comparison in this study: The first is between students of different racial and socio-economic backgrounds in the same class, who as Epstein (Epstein, 2009) points out, are likely to come to class with ideas about history that have been passed down from families and communities. The second is between the teachers and students in different classrooms and schools. Previous research (Apple, 1991) indicates that students in different classrooms are likely to be exposed to different pedagogies, hidden curriculums, and historical narratives within their formal education. Students in the same class may, as a result of school culture and the approach of their teacher, develop similar opinions and approaches to historical legacies. Through being conscious of these two levels of comparison, I collected data which helped me to tease out the relationship between history education, legacy thinking, and attitudes towards South African society.

Five factors were considered when selecting the school case studies:

The first factor was geographical location. South Africa, and particularly Cape Town, is highly segregated in terms of race and class and in most cases schools serving a particular racial group will be situated close together. However, my research design required that I observe every history lesson that a Grade 9 class attended over the course of ten months. This meant that I often observed up to three history classes per day at different schools. The distance between the schools needed to be no more than twenty minutes, in order to ensure that I could attend all the classes. Very few areas in Cape Town had schools serving different racial groups within close proximity, and this therefore significantly reduced the options of schools I could approach.

The second factor was the order in which schools taught the curriculum. Some schools prefer to teach half a year of Geography, followed by half a year of History, while others chose to teach the module that

addresses apartheid history during the first term. However, for the purposes of this study the selected schools needed to teach the apartheid modules in the second, third, or fourth term.

The third factor was that the schools needed to be government schools in order to ensure that they all used the same history curriculum, and that all the teachers had government-accredited teaching qualifications. This decision added theoretical weight to the findings, since the differences in approaches to historical consciousness could not simply be attributed to differences in curriculum or teacher training.

The fourth factor was that the four schools needed to be sufficiently different from each other in regard to their racial demographics. I was able to ascertain the racial demographics of the schools in advance through speaking with academics in the Department of Education at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The realities of racial segregation and inequality in Cape Town meant that the racial demographics of the schools also had a bearing on the school fees, and on the family income levels of the students (See Chapter 3).

The fifth factor was the consent of the principal, the history teacher, all students in the chosen Grade 9 history class, and their parents, to participate in this study.

The decision of which Grade 9 history class to choose from within the school, I left to the teacher, and each teacher had different reasons, e.g. good relationship with the class, students who were vocal, timetable considerations.

Ethnographic Classroom Case Studies

Ethnographic research involves observation, description, interaction, and reflective processes of deciphering meaning. Ethnographers sit and watch; they describe, in writing, what they see and hear in given social settings; they interact with the people whom they are studying; they pose questions; and they have discussions. They decipher meaning through conscious processes of reflection on the holistic

whole of the ethnographic experience (Kawulich, 2005). As the researcher becomes a more familiar and trusted presence, participants are less likely to behave uncharacteristically and instead reveal more about their lives. The success of an ethnography depends on the ethnographer being open to learn from those who inhabit that culture, being willing to see everything, and suspend otherwise-premature judgement on what should be selected as data. This quality of openness lies at the heart of my approach to ethnography, its processes, purposes, and ethics.

This study consists of four classroom ethnographies, each constituting a case study. By some definitions, all ethnographies are case studies, given that there is an inherent boundedness to the area in which one ethnographer can conduct participant observation. Stake (1995) however, makes the distinction between ethnography as a methodological choice, and case study as a choice of object to be studied. While ethnography aims to create a holistic cultural portrait of a social group, case study takes as the focus of its study a bounded system of some kind.

I use the term “case study” to flag the boundedness of the history classroom which is the focus of this study. In doing so I do not mean to imply that history classrooms are the only spaces where historical legacies are formed, or that history classrooms are not interconnected with broader school, family, and society cultures. Rather, I consider the classroom to be an important site where multiple agendas, identities and memories meet and influence the student; e.g. the hopes and intentions of the state, the values of the teacher, the identities of the students, the memories of the community. The focus of my study is not history teaching, but rather classroom interactions that in any way concern legacies of apartheid.

Why ethnography?

The theoretical aims of this study are best served by an ethnographic approach. This study is interested in how ideas – particularly ideas which imply legacy thinking – come to take precedence within the unique cultural circumstances of four different classrooms.

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, how people understand and use historical legacies are culturally mediated. Legacy thinking is therefore likely to be influenced by teachers' and students' identities and positionality in the classroom, in ways that the participants themselves are not fully aware of or do not wish to acknowledge. This might be particularly the case in the context of South Africa where beliefs regarding apartheid legacies may have controversial political implications. Thus, classroom observation and "hanging out" (Geertz, 1973) provide a reality check as well as a source of first-hand information.

The use of an ethnographic "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) approach for the purposes of researching legacy thinking is therefore not what Hammersley has criticized as being merely "the description of the diversity and complexity of the perspectives and activities of teachers and pupils", with only "sketches being provided of explanations for the patterns discovered" (Hammersley, 1985, p. 244-245). Rather the approach that I have used draws from a strong theoretical understanding of what legacy thinking is, and evidence to suggest that it might be manifested differently and in unintentional ways in different classrooms (see Chapter 2). Understanding how diverse legacy constructions gain precedence in different classrooms involves a different orientation to the one criticized by Hammersley. The focus of this study is not on given events, but rather on a particular theoretical idea, and those aspects of any events whose investigation might facilitate the development and testing of that idea.

Central to this study is the recognition that ideas are not spread unidirectionally, from the teacher to the students. Rather, ideas are discussed, negotiated, and renegotiated as more information is introduced.

Ideas are furthermore mediated by the beliefs, attitudes and norms held by the teachers and students who enter the classroom space, as well as by the roles they perform in that space.

Ideas regarding historical legacies might therefore best be understood as a form of cultural production through cultural pedagogy. Cultural pedagogy (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) refers to the ways in which particular cultural agents produce particular hegemonic ways of seeing. While the teacher may be a dominant “cultural agent” in the classroom space, students also exert agency through the ways in which they choose to challenge, question, engage with, or ignore what their teacher presents. As becomes evident from the data, students in part constrain the ideas that the teacher can safely teach, and shape how their classmates interpret the lesson.

An ethnographic approach is therefore valuable for addressing the question of how beliefs about historical legacies develop over time. It allows room to observe the interaction of various “ways of seeing,” and how these ways of seeing are negotiated in the classroom. Lutz (1986) articulates why I believed ethnography would be the most productive approach to deciphering how teachers and students interact over legacies of apartheid. He writes that:

“Ethnography is a holistic, thick description of the interactive processes involving the discovery of important and recurring variables in the society as they relate to one another, under specified conditions, and as they affect or produce certain results and outcomes in the society” (Lutz, 1986, p. 108).

The methods of ethnography would enable access to the intricacies of how ideas develop in classrooms that I could not gauge by surveys, questionnaires, or interviews since surveys or interviews could only capture individual perspectives outside of the classroom context, and in isolation from other perspectives. As LeCompte and Preissle describe, ethnographic methods could by contrast generate data on “the complexity of phenomena within their naturally occurring contexts” (Preissle & LeCompte, 1984, p. 168).

Indeed, by spending extensive periods of time with the students and engaging them in different contexts around the school I was able to better understand the contested nature of historical legacies, and reflect upon the role that history education had vis-à-vis other influencing factors, e.g. parental opinion, media, peer groups. Rather than seeing students' legacy thinking as being static, and as having a simple unidirectional relationship with the history education they receive, classroom ethnography gave the opportunity to observe change in participants, and to understand how they grapple in a reflexive way with what they are being taught. Ethnography is perhaps uniquely suited to the study of such a phenomenon, as it too shares the act of learning through participation, experience, and testing new information against old understandings.

Ethnography was also important in understanding what was taught about contemporary apartheid legacies. As Jackson (Jackson, 1990) has demonstrated, there is a tremendous impact of non-intended and somewhat autonomously directed learning practices in classrooms, which he named the "hidden curriculum." Jackson's notion of schools as learning spheres in which not everything is regulated by the curricula, and in which much happens besides curricula, is particularly pertinent when the object of study – legacies of the past – are not in the curriculum or any official teacher training documents. Furthermore, Resh and Benavot (Resh & Benavot, 2009) state that the chances of hidden curricula occurring on a greater scale are higher in societies with particularly diverse school systems, as is the case in South Africa.

There are however limitations to the ethnographic approach. For example, this study does not seek to 'map' out distinct historical legacies, and it does not reflect on students' historical thinking skills in relation to the construction of historical legacies. It also cannot conclude that a student's beliefs about the contemporary legacies of apartheid are as a direct result (or not) of the history teaching they've been exposed to. In this sense the findings of this study do rely heavily on qualitative description; descriptions of how ideas regarding historical legacies are prioritized or deflected in the course of classroom discussions, or of how various pedagogical approaches give credence to certain logics, or of how the

lived realities of the teachers and students shape their historical interests. However, within these descriptions is a close analytic focus on how certain patterns or beliefs arise within the classroom, how they are negotiated by individual students, and how they differ between schools.

Teacher and Student Interviews

The ethnographic classroom observations were also supported by a series of interviews and focus groups with the teachers and students. These were integral to the project of understanding how students and teachers think about legacies of apartheid and provided a space away from the classroom to reflect on what is being taught, discussed, and observed. They serve to decenter the researcher by allowing alternative interpretations of how and why historical legacies are being navigated in the classroom. As such they deepened the ability to theorize from the ethnographic classroom observations on the ways in which certain ideas about legacies of apartheid gain hegemonic status; the connections between past and present that feel safe and legitimate to the students and teacher, versus the ones that feel confusing, unconvincing, or unfair.

The interviews furthermore allow individual voices to emerge in a way that is not possible in a classroom, and so challenge the assumption that what is happening during history lessons is received by both the teacher and students in uniform and uncomplicated ways. Given the body of literature which suggests that students develop very different historical understandings from the same history lessons (Epstein, 2009; Angier, 2017; Teeger, 2015), it is important to focus not just on the classroom as a specific cultural setting. Rather, to also recognize that the unique group of people who meet for 2-3 hours a week have lives outside that space which shape their contribution to what I observe. The interviews give opportunities to understand these lives outside the history classroom, and to explore with the participants how their legacy thinking is shaped by their wider communities and experiences.

With particular regard to the teacher interviews, Weldon (Weldon, 2009, p. 253) points out that the majority of educators in South Africa are still the generation of victims and perpetrators and calls for special attention to these circumstances. Having lived the history they are now teaching, there is a particular need to recognize and be sensitive to how teachers position themselves in legacies of apartheid, and the tensions this might generate.

Researcher Positionality

The teacher has still not arrived. I'm sitting with the Grade 9 history class at Thokozani High. The temporary classrooms in which we sit are freezing – the door doesn't shut – so much so that I have sneaked a small hot water bottle under my coat. "Can I have some of your heat?" asks the female student sitting behind me, and we warm our hands together.

Outside the classroom door are puddles so large and deep that the students have created small bridges across them using loose bricks and planks of wood. I reflect on how this would never be allowed at Southgate High, only five minutes' drive away, and I feel angry. As we wait students are braiding each other's hair, reading their textbook, or chatting happily. My anger is confused and compounded by the knowledge that in South African terms this is a good school. Students pay R1000 to attend, and R6000 in transport fees to commute from townships. Yet it's almost halfway through the lesson and the teacher still hasn't turned up.

Boredom is something that these students are used to at school, but I am struggling. Not infrequently do I sit in this class for an hour, waiting for the teacher to come, feeling angry, feeling sad. The students are here, with their textbooks open, yet nothing happens. I wonder if I should stand up and teach the lesson? I reason that – unqualified though I am – I would be better than nothing. But I never pluck up the courage and the students never suggest it. I pass the time writing in my notebook, recording every minute detail I can think of, until the bell rings and I can leave.

The nature of this study – an ethnography which is interested in how identities shape and are shaped by the construction of historical legacies in a post-conflict society – requires careful consideration of the positionality of the researcher. By positionality I refer to the ways in which my own identity and role in the research interacts with the data collection design, process, and analysis; and the ways in which it shapes the outcome of the research findings. Virtually no researcher approaches the field with no preconceptions; most realize that at the very least, their own training and interests create so-called tacit or personal theories about how the world works (Preissle & LeCompte, 1984) and thus influence what researchers notice in the field and see in the data, and determine how they proceed

In the interests of rigorous data collection, but also of sincerity, I did not limit myself to professional relationships with my participants, nor treat them primarily as “data sources”. Rather, I let friendships develop naturally. This meant that conversations with the teachers and students often focused on our families, our future career plans, our frustrations, and in the case of one teacher, his alcoholism. I met my participants’ families, ate dinner together, lent and borrowed books, WhatsApp-ed photos of our holidays. At first I was hesitant to allow these friendships to develop since I worried that the teachers in particular might feel betrayed if the tone or content of my dissertation was not to their liking. However, over the course of the year, as trust developed, it became easier to share these concerns and to challenge myself to be as transparent as possible. Ultimately this approach resulted in some very honest conversations that have done much to enrich the data. I suggest that since my positionality had a strong impact on this research, it merits discussion.

I am a mixed-race (Caucasian and Indian) female in my late twenties. I was born in Northern Ireland. I am married to a White South African man. I attend an elite university, but I am not a teacher or an historian. I am English-speaking, but I studied isiXhosa. What meanings might these identities hold the context of four different history classrooms in Cape Town?

In the South African context, particularly being married to a White man and living in an historically White neighborhood, I was regarded as White despite my Indian heritage. This perception of my racial identity, combined with my institutional affiliation, placed me in a privileged position when approaching schools and asking for participation. While the White teachers engaged with me as equals, the Black and Coloured teachers treated me with greater reverence. I was able to mitigate this caution by speaking about my Indian mother and my own discomfort as being assumed to be White in South Africa. This particularly resonated with the Coloured teachers and students, who often felt racially misidentified.

Being married to a South African proved extremely valuable when gaining access to the schools and building relationships. In the first instance, it meant that I could have a closer relationship with the four male teachers than perhaps would have been possible if I were single. Invitations to dinner for example were ‘safe’ since my husband was also always invited. Indeed, my marriage was often the first thing a teacher would mention when introducing me to his colleagues. It indicated to my participants that I was personally invested in their country rather than “passing through”, and it also helped to place me. The common introductory question in Cape Town of “where did you go to school?” could instead be rephrased as “where did your husband go to school?”.

My husband’s “political credentials” also proved helpful when building trust, since all the teachers in my sample considered themselves as Left-leaning progressives. The fact that my husband’s middle name is Sizwe (a common Xhosa name meaning ‘nation’), that he had lived in the township of Khayelitsha where he worked, that he spoke good isiXhosa, and that his father is a member of the ANC, all helped to identify me in the South African context as a non-racist. I was therefore eager to foreground these details in my first interactions. Within the majority-Black school, the fact that I had studied isiXhosa for six months was further evidence of my progressive identity and was frequently mentioned by the teacher to his class.

A natural concern of a number of the participants was the fear of being judged on their teaching or schoolwork. It therefore proved helpful to clearly identify myself as an anthropologist, rather than a historian or teacher. Indeed, I often foregrounded my ignorance of South African history in order to position the teachers and the students as experts who I could learn from. Yet despite my perceived ignorance of South African history, my Northern Irish background and the history of conflict in that region helped to build empathy.

In short, the way in which I drew on the various aspects of my identity helped to position myself in the eyes of my participants as being committed to the development of a progressive South Africa, while also being something of a South African novice who was open to learning. I believe that this served me well when gaining access to schools and building trust with participants.

My identity also cannot be divorced from the value lens through which I approached this research. A question that I have grappled with while framing this methodology is whether or not this study is a “critical ethnography” that hopes to contribute to “critical social theory”. In this context, critical theory analyses competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society - identifying who gains and who loses in specific situations and seeking to better equalize it. The question of how students learn to construct historical legacies, to the extent that it impacts upon important contemporary decisions in South Africa such as reparations and land reform, has implications for the distribution of power and privilege. A society, for example, that does not believe that apartheid has economic legacies will see no rationale for apartheid reparations to Black and Coloured people. It is for this reason that I think it is important to study how historical legacies are constructed.

I furthermore believe that apartheid does have contemporary economic legacies, and that some people’s understandings of apartheid legacies are more accurate than others. I am concerned about the levels of inequality in South Africa and believe that they need to be reduced. However, I recognize that legacies of apartheid are complex and that counterfactuals – what South Africa would have looked like if

apartheid or colonialism had never happened – are impossible to assess. It is an issue upon which intelligent and well-meaning people can and do disagree (Terreblanche, 2003). It is therefore of particular importance not to “present value conclusions as if they were research findings” (Hammersley M., 2004, p. 25).

To the extent possible, I have therefore taken a methodological decision in this research to suspend judgement on the various ways that teachers and students understand the contemporary legacies of the past. In other words, I do not seek to assess whether certain constructions of historical legacies are better or worse than others. Rather I have sought to describe the various ways that historical legacies are being spoken about, in order to further our theoretical understanding of how certain ideas regarding historical legacies come to take precedence in individual Grade 9 history classrooms.

Suspending judgement has been difficult. I have often caught myself favoring one teacher’s approach over another’s, or even feeling angry at the inequality between the schools in my sample. However, I have countered these feelings of judgement with a desire to better understand the beliefs and decisions of my participants. I feel confident that this approach has led to richer and more reliable data. So is this study a critical ethnography? Yes and no. While this research has implications for how power and privilege are distributed in South Africa, and while the researcher is personally motivated to create a more equal South Africa, the research itself does not seek to uncover winners and losers or the social relations by which power plays operate.

While this study is not an autoethnography, in that it is not primarily interested in “the exploration of self in relation to other and the space created between them” (Starr, 2010), I have chosen to “write myself” into the research in a way that draws on auto-ethnographic approaches. In this regard I draw guidance from Anderson;

“Auto-ethnographers should illustrate analytic insights through recounting their own experiences and thoughts as well as those of others. Furthermore, they should openly discuss

changes in their beliefs and relationships over the course of fieldwork, thus vividly revealing themselves as people grappling with issues relevant to membership and participation in fluid rather than static social worlds. Auto-ethnographers should expect to be involved in the construction of meaning and values in the social worlds they investigate. As full-fledged members, they cannot always sit observantly on the side-lines. They should not necessarily shy away from participating in potentially divisive issues, although it seems to me that they have no more responsibility to vocalize or act upon unpopular positions than they do in other aspects of their lives... They must textually acknowledge and reflexively assess the ways in which their participation reproduces and/or transforms social understandings and relations.” (Anderson, 2006, p. 11)

The decision to employ autoethnographic approaches was motivated by two considerations. The first was an ethical commitment to transparency in regard to the research methodology and analysis, as well as an ethical commitment to not objectifying my participants by writing about them as though they live in a world that I do not also inhabit. This seemed particularly important given the status differentials between me and some of my participants. To quote Scheurich, “We cannot just critique the world out there. We have to place ourselves, our subjectivities, our personal selves inside the circle of critique and struggle... [Otherwise] we end up as just another elite white group” (Scheurich, 2002, p. 152).

The second consideration was a methodological curiosity regarding the ways in which my own historical consciousness has changed over the course of sitting through a year of Grade 9 South African history. Disciplines like education are ripe grounds for autoethnographic study because a social construction of knowledge, identity and culture is inherent. This is particularly true in a study which seeks to understand how beliefs regarding historical legacies are constructed over a ten-month period. I was interested to understand whether anything I learned would challenge my understanding, and whether these ‘challenges’ could help me build empathy with students who were also being challenged by their own

difficult history. To supplement my fieldwork, I therefore systematically read books on South Africa's history and its legacies. These reflections also became part of my fieldnotes.

Narrative Voice

An important aspect of ethnography is the manner in which observations are communicated. This 'narrative voice' is central not only to the readers understanding of the findings, but also to ethical concerns regarding representation of participants, as well as the legitimacy of the research findings. Part of the ethnographic process is recognizing that my observations are told, filtered, ordered and understood through my consciousness; they are made vivid through my rhetoric and narrative. Richardson (Richardson, 1990) comments on the role of narrative; he writes that "[i]f we wish to understand the deepest and most universal of human experiences, if we wish our work to be faithful to the lived experiences of people, if we wish for a union between poetics and science, or if we wish to use our privileges and skills to empower the people we study, then we should value the narrative."

I have two primary concerns when it comes to narrative voice. The first is in regard to an adequate and accurate representation of the complexities of the situation. I suggest that 'accuracy' is not aided by a forensic study of the classroom, but rather by 'impressionist' (Van Maanen, 2011) accounts which help the immersion of the reader in culture and context. Atkinson and Atkinson characterizes the power of literary devices when they write that

"[t]he use of tropes (figures of speech) such as metaphor and synecdoche is not a matter of arbitrary or optional embellishment. Its attempted elimination would rob us of the power to describe social events and action in intelligible terms. The removal of metaphorical usage would reduce us to the most banal and meaningless of purely behavioral accounts. Metaphorical usage is fundamental to the analytic force of many social-scientific theories and models." (Atkinson & Atkinson, 1992, p. 12)

In a study which is focused on micro-interactions and meaning-making in contested environments, I embrace a literary style that can reflect the tensions and contradictions of historical consciousness. In particular, I use vignettes from the field-site throughout the findings chapters to help illustrate the cultures and conflicts present in the classrooms.

The second is in regards to sensitivity and non-judgement, the reasons for which I have addressed above. I compare the work of Dryden (Dryden, 1999) and Geschier (Geschier, 2003), both of whom conducted ethnographies of history classrooms in South Africa. Geschier was careful to “write herself” into the text, which resulted in critical judgements of her participants. By including her voice so strongly in the research, I suggest that Geicher stunted her capacity to empathize with the perspectives of participants, and created a manuscript that felt condescending and final in her judgement.

Dryden, by contrast, writes lightly, rarely passing judgement on what her participants say or do and rather representing their perspectives more compassionately and playfully. This writing style foregrounds the voices of the participants, giving them space to articulate their reasoning and uncertainties. Dryden describes her approach as seeking to “juxtapose ideas and situations so as to create conversations with the text, allowing for the voice of more than one analyst” (Dryden, 1999, p. 20). Through this mechanism she emphasized the “precariously provisional nature of mutual understanding” (Atkinson & Atkinson, 1992, p. 43); conversations that cannot be summed up by rigid explanatory frameworks and which are never finished. I aim to emulate Dryden’s approach of compassionate representation, since I believe that it enhances the reader’s compassionate interaction with the text and thus better serves the understanding of how different historical legacies emerge. In a country which has experienced so much division and judgement, compassionate representation assumes particular ethical importance.

Considerations around race and language

Race is a cultural construct, often oppressive in nature, and with no scientific validity. However, it holds meaning in the minds of many South Africans. In writing this dissertation I have struggled with how to speak about race. To ignore race would not only be a refusal to acknowledge the lived reality of those I purport to study but would also blind me to the lines along which discrimination and privilege fall. I have therefore sought to respect the sense of belonging, pride, and agency that many people derive from its construction, without justifying its existence.

It would furthermore be untruthful to claim that my own understanding of and interest in racial dynamics didn't shape the choice of schools and students that I invited to participate in this study. This research was motivated by an interest in transitional justice and apartheid legacies in a country historically divided by race. My field notes often identified race. The questions that I asked teachers and students often referenced race. My own racial identity mediated access and interactions.

Race cannot be ignored but how should it be acknowledged? In writing this dissertation I use capital letters in reference to racial terminology to serve as a reminder that these identities are politically constructed labels, rather than descriptive. In Appendix 5 I have included a table of participants, which lists their racial identity as they ascribe it to themselves. The purpose of this table is to assist the reader as I describe the numerous teachers and students who participated in this study. However, I have chosen not to foreground this table in each case study chapter, so as to avoid essentializing the racial identities of the participants. Rather, I portray the participants' complex, shifting, and negotiated racial identities within each case study chapter through thick ethnographic description.

Part Two: Practical Approaches

In Part Two I outline the practical approaches that I took when collecting data. This includes gaining access, conducting classroom observations, and conducting teacher and student interviews.

Gaining access

I had originally hoped to gain access to schools through the introductions of a teacher educator who worked closely with history teachers. However, after waiting a number of weeks these introductions did not materialize. I therefore began emailing schools using the addresses found on their websites which resulted in one reply and a subsequent meeting. I then phoned all the remaining schools which met the criteria outlined above. These phone calls resulted in two further meetings. Since there was only one school in the area with a majority Black student population, and since they were not responding to my emails or phone calls, I visited the school without an appointment and was able to introduce myself to the Head of the History Department, who then helped me to arrange a meeting with the Grade 9 history teacher.

Of the seven schools who responded to my emails, phone calls, and visits, three rejected the invitation to participate in the research. The reasons given were 1) the research would take too much time away from teachers and students, 2) the Grade 9 history teacher was about to resign her post, and 3) the Grade 9 history teacher was new to her post and very junior.

All of the meetings that I arranged with the four schools resulted in their agreement to participate. During each of the first meetings I brought a letter of invitation to participate, along with information about the project, examples of teacher and student consent forms, and certificates of ethical clearance from the University of Oxford and the Western Cape Education Department. These documents can be found in Appendix 3. The teachers read the letter of invitation during the meeting and then had an opportunity to

ask questions. At John May High School the meeting was very formal and was attended by the Deputy Principal, the Head of History, and the Grade 9 history teacher. However, the other three meetings were relatively casual and offered an opportunity to get to know the teacher on a more personal basis. By coincidence all the Grade 9 history teachers in my sample were male, however since I was not interested in gendered approaches to history teaching I did not identify this as a limitation to the research. Two of the teachers were heads of history in their schools, and two were not. Three of the teachers had been adults when apartheid ended, and one had been a child.

When introducing the research to the teachers and students I was not explicit about the precise nature of the study. I told the participants that the study was interested in how history was taught in post-apartheid South Africa, and how students developed “historical consciousness”. I intentionally left the definition of historical consciousness opaque because I did not want the teachers to shape their teaching to reflect my research interests. On one occasion a teacher pointed out to me how well his class were developing historical consciousness, however it was clear that he was referring to historical thinking skills.

I had initially assumed that the duration and intensity of the data collection would have been off-putting to the teachers, since it required me to sit in 2-3 of their classes per week for three terms. However, the teachers expressed enthusiasm for being part of such an in-depth study. One teacher explained that he often got approached to participate in short-term research projects that required one or two interviews, after which he never heard from the researcher again.

Once the teacher and principal consented to participate in the study, I was introduced to one of the Grade 9 history classes where I was given 15 minutes to present the research study, hand out consent forms, and answer any questions. Students who did not want to participate had the opportunity to opt-out, in which case a different Grade 9 class would have been chosen. However, all the students agreed to participate.

After spending 2-3 weeks observing the classes I asked for five student volunteers from each class who would be willing to participate in a series of interviews and focus groups. I explained to the students that I was not interested in how much they knew about history, but rather their opinions about history. In some of the classes the students were very willing and I ended up turning some volunteers away, whereas in other classes I asked a number of times before I had enough volunteers. In one school I was only able to recruit four volunteers, while in another I ended up including six volunteers. All students who participated in interviews and focus groups needed signed ‘opt-in’ consent from their parents.

Details of the schools, teachers, and volunteer students can be found in the table below. The names of all the schools and participants are pseudonyms.

Table 1: Names of the schools, teachers, and students who participated in this research

School	Teacher	Student
Southgate	Alfie Villiers	Esther
		Macie
		Alice
		Meena
		Anika
Thokozani	Luthando Mzamane	Dumisa
		Khwezi
		Thandiwe

		Zintle
		Anathi
Stamford	Dan Richardson	Deborah
		Aphiwe
		Amir
		Saara
		Michelle
		Linda
John May	Simon Lembe	Clint
		Candice
		Atif
		Kim

Conducting Observations

“Ma’am, what are you writing, ma’am?”

A group of boys shoved each other, trying to get a closer look at my notebook as they walked out of class. There was a note of transgression in their question, as though anything written in a notebook must be inherently private and not for the eyes of 'children'.

"I'm writing down what happened in class today," I explained, and turned the notebook around for them to take a better look, confident that they wouldn't be able to read my scrawl. I began reading, word for word, the transcript I had made of their history lesson, careful to omit any judgements I had passed on their history teacher.

"Do you write down everything, ma'am?" a student asked in shock.

"Yes, well I try to."

"Will you write down my question just now, ma'am?"

"Yes," and we laughed.

I conducted observations of all the Grade 9 history classes' history lessons between April 2018 and December 2018. This time-span constituted Terms 2, 3 and 4 of the academic year. Each class had between two and three history lessons per week. Two of the schools had a one-week timetable, one of the schools had a two-week timetable, and one of the schools had a seven-day timetable. This meant that I observed between one and three classes per day. On less than five occasions I missed a history class. This was due either to a timetable clash with another class, or to a change in the timetable which the teacher did not know about or had forgotten to communicate to me.

As well as observing the history classes I attended school events such as assemblies, talks, and field trips. I also spent time in the schools between classes, often in the staffroom or the library. This gave me an opportunity to experience the wider school culture, to get to know the other teachers, and to become familiar with the various conversations happening in the school. I recorded my reflections from these

experiences along with the classroom observations in notebooks. Time between classes also represented socializing time with the history teachers, and an opportunity to get to know them in a more personal capacity. Two of the teachers in particular enjoyed introducing me to their colleagues.

During the first meetings with the teachers, I offered to help in the classes both to thank the teachers for their participation, and as a way to build stronger relationships with the students. In Stamford High, John May High, and Thokozani High, I facilitated a workshop on essay writing for the students, and another workshop on how to conduct a research interview. In an effort to distinguish myself from their teacher I tried to make these lessons as fun and activity-driven as possible. In John May High I helped the teacher – Mr. Lembe – to facilitate a discussion on race as a construct. The content of this discussion was included in the history textbook, but we explored the concept of race in more depth and fielded questions from the students. Lastly, I facilitated a student exchange, accompanying John May High students to visit Stamford High and Southgate High, and accompanying Southgate High students to visit John May High. Similar visits between schools had taken place in the past, and I volunteered to be the organizer. I did not intend for these engagements to become an explicit part of the study; rather I perceived them as an inevitable aspect of becoming a part of, and contributing to, a school community. However, as the data indicate, these activities at times featured in my observations and interview notes, thus becoming part of the findings.

When possible I tried to arrive early for class. This allowed me to queue up outside the classroom with the students, and offered an opportunity to talk with them, answer their questions, share their sweets, joke about their teacher, and develop friendly relationships. As far as possible I tried to indicate that I was not a teacher or authority figure. I would openly share small details about my life, and I never sought to discipline a student even in the absence of their teacher.

While observing the history lessons I sat where the teacher suggested. In two of the classrooms this was at the back, facing the teacher. In one classroom it was at the front, facing the teacher, and in another it

was at the front, facing the class. I took field notes using a notebook and pen. Sometimes the students were curious about what I was writing, and on these occasions I read them extracts from my field notes.

My classroom observation field notes included descriptions of the classroom space (e.g. the seating arrangements, wall displays, location in the school), the classroom resources that were being used (e.g. projector, textbooks, films, worksheets), the mood of the classroom (e.g. low-energy, excitement, tense), the interactions and movements of the students (e.g. students talking between themselves, students walking around the classroom, students with their heads on their desks), the communications and interactions of the teacher (e.g. what the teacher is saying, where he stands in the classroom, where he directs his attention), and the interactions between the students and the teacher (e.g. instructions, questions and answers, jokes, disciplining). In most of the classes the pedagogy was teacher-centered, with the teacher taking up most of the talking time.

As far as possible I recorded word-for-word what the teacher and students were saying in the class, with a particular focus on times where the teacher and students were speaking about historical events or their legacies. This resulted in transcripts of classroom lessons and discussions. Unfortunately, depending on where I was sitting, I was not always able to hear students' contributions to the discussions. In Thokozani, where classroom interactions between students took place in isiXhosa, I also struggled to follow what was being said. Extracts from my field notes can be found in Appendix 4.

My aim while observing the classes was to cause as little disruption as possible to the flow of teaching, and I therefore never initiated interaction with the teacher or students during the course of the lesson. However the teachers and students would frequently but in small ways initiate interaction with me. A teacher might, for example, ask me to change slides on his PowerPoint presentation, refer to my time spent in China when teaching about Communism, or use my presence as a way to congratulate or discipline his students, e.g. "I'm sure Mrs. Robinson is very impressed by your answers, aren't you Mrs.

Robinson?” The students would sometimes stare at me and then smile sheepishly when I caught them staring. At times they asked if they could borrow a pen or tried to ask me personal questions during class.

I welcomed these interactions so long as they did not disturb the class. However, it became difficult to maintain political neutrality as teachers would sometimes ask me to weigh-in on classroom debates, or use conversations that we had had outside of class to substantiate their own opinions. For example, on one occasion when a student suggested that the Holocaust was worse than apartheid, the teacher asked me to comment. Another teacher asked me to address his students who were threatening to strike because of the school’s uniform policy. A third teacher used me as an example of how not all White people are racist. On these occasions I neither sought to present a neutral position, nor to influence the students’ thinking. Rather I tried to present my thoughts honestly and clearly and invited the students to do the same. The one exception to this occurred on the last day of class at Southgate High, and I will discuss this incident in Chapter 6.

It is of course impossible to say exactly how my presence in the classroom affected the ways in which the teachers and students interacted or discussed legacies of apartheid. The fact that I was in the classroom for almost ten months and was therefore a regular feature of the lessons perhaps helped in normalizing my presence and mitigated the likelihood that teachers and students would behave differently. Although the teachers would sometimes engage me in the class, I believe that this was to reinforce opinions they already held rather than to introduce new perspectives to the students. All of the teachers expressed pleasure that I observed their lessons, and one felt that his students performed better in the end of year exam because my interest in history education had raised the status of the subject in the eyes of the students. Students told me that the interviews they participated in made them realize that history was more interesting than they had previously thought, although almost none of them wished to take the subject beyond Grade 9.

Conducting Interviews and Focus Groups

Teacher Interviews

By December 2018 my friendship with Simon Lembe was well established. I had been observing his Grade 9 history class three times a week for nine months, and often joined him for coffee in the staffroom. His warm and open personality was infectious. He couldn't pass a colleague in the corridor without offering a compliment or a joke; "When are you going to marry me, Miss Davids?" he would tease, "am I not handsome enough for you?!"

I felt confident by the end of the fieldwork that Simon was someone I could share my observation notes with. He had just finished an Honors degree in history teaching and was eager for opportunities to professionally develop. There was a strong mutual trust. Nevertheless, I offered some words of warning before I gave him the thick manuscript of observation transcripts; "It can be disorientating - even upsetting - to be the object of someone else's ethnographic gaze," I explained.

And I was right. When we met several weeks later to discuss the observations I asked Simon what had most surprised him from the data. He put his head in his hands; "I didn't realize I spoke about race like that to the children. I'm a product of apartheid."

I conducted recorded interviews with all of the teachers at least twice; once at the beginning of the year, and once at the end. The interviews were very unstructured and often lasted a number of hours. The teacher chose where the interview took place; in his classroom, at his home, in the school library, or in a coffee shop.

During the first interview I sought to understand their motivations for becoming history teachers and why they chose their current school. This allowed me to gain an insight into the teachers' backgrounds

and their politics. I also sought to understand the school demographics and culture; the family backgrounds of their students, the challenges that the school faces, and how the school has changed since they began teaching. This often led to a conversation about the school's management, and how the teacher perceived his role within the school culture. Lastly, I asked the teachers about their approach to teaching history and what they hoped to achieve through this approach.

During the second interview I shared some of my fieldnotes and reflections from my fieldwork with the teachers and asked for their feedback. The interview questions were therefore shaped by what I had observed in each individual classroom. I tried to be as honest as possible with the teachers, and communicated that my analysis process was still in its nascent stages, and that I was very open to changing my mind. This produced a very rich, stimulating, and collegial discussion. My familiarity with the class meant that we could speak about specific instances of teaching, what the teacher had hoped to achieve in those moments, and whether or not he felt he had been successful. We could speak about specific students, and how and why they reacted to certain lessons. I could also give a general overview of the year, pointing out patterns in the teaching or classroom dynamics that I found interesting, and asking for the teacher's insights. For example, in one class the students often referred to life under apartheid as being preferable to life today, and when this happened the teacher would often become defensive or sad. During our second interview we spoke about the reasons why the students believed that life under apartheid was preferable, how the teacher felt on these occasions, why he felt that way, and what he hoped to achieve in his responses.

The depth of these conversations was very dependent on the depth of trust that I had built with the teacher over the year, and how willing he was to reflect on his own teaching practice. With two of the teachers the discussions were extremely honest, and I felt that it was possible for them to argue against my interpretations when they disagreed. These teachers also felt that the exercise of reflecting on their teaching was professionally valuable, and they invited me to share my findings. I ended up sharing all of my field notes with these two teachers, and we continued the discussion and reflection even after I

left South Africa. I shared my fieldnotes with Mr. Richardson using Google documents. This enabled him to make edits to the document and facilitated an asynchronous discussion of specific aspects of the findings. For Mr. Lembe, I shared a hard copy of the fieldnotes, which he returned with comments written in the margins. I interviewed both teachers after they had read the fieldnotes from their classes. In both cases I was careful not to share fieldnotes that might compromise the confidentiality of other research participants.

With the other two teachers – Mr. Cilliers and Mr. Mzamane – I felt that it was not possible or appropriate to share all my reflections. When I offered to share the fieldnotes, they were less enthusiastic. Given their lack of interest, I worried about the ethics of imposing on them my impressions of their teaching and classroom. While they had consented to my collection of data, they had not consented to any expectation that they would spend time reading or grappling with my findings. When interviewing these teachers, I therefore selected a few instances from my fieldnotes to share and discuss with them.

Students Interviews and Focus Groups

Over the course of the fieldwork I attempted to meet with each student at least three times; first during a one-to-one interview, second in the context of a focus group, and third either in a focus group, a pair, or one-to-one. At John May High School I was only able to meet with each student once, since these students were not interested in participating in the research, they did not remember to attend the interviews we scheduled, and they did not have regular access to mobile phones, so it was difficult to contact them.

I chose to begin with a one-to-one interview in order to get to know the student and to learn about their background without the influence of their peers. I was explicit about all aspects of the research not only for ethical reasons, but also to increase the extent to which I accessed the students' voices. I assumed that if they were confused about any aspect of the research, then they might not feel confident about

participating. This in turn might make them less open with me. When I first met them during the interview, I stressed that the interview was confidential and that I was not interested in how good they were at history, but rather about their honest opinions. I also suggested that they feel free to ask me any questions, since “it’s only fair” that the relationship was reciprocal. Most of the students didn’t ask me anything, however one student initiated a long series of questions about my wedding, which I patiently answered.

The first interview with each student was semi-structured and lasted approximately 30 minutes. I asked the same set of questions which can be found in Appendix 1. These questions concerned their own family’s history, what they have studied in history thus far, the parts of history that they most enjoyed learning about, the parts of history that they feel are most relevant to their own lives, and why they thought some periods of history were included in the curriculum while others were not. For each of these questions I probed deeper, asking the students to explain their answers. At the end of the interview I asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview and all of the students agreed.

The focus groups included all the students from the class that had participated in an interview. However, in one school scheduling clashes meant that a student could not attend the focus group. Focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes and took place in the students’ history classrooms. In order to thank the students for attending the focus group, but also to distinguish this space from their classroom discussions, I baked cake for the students and brought tea or cold drinks as refreshments.

The purpose of the focus groups, as opposed to the interviews, was to generate discussion among the students regarding why South African society is the way it is. I actively encouraged students to interact with each other by asking them to reflect on what their peers said. I was interested in understanding whether the students would draw on historical explanations for contemporary social issues. However, I was careful to allow the students to introduce the aspect of South African society that we discussed to ensure that it was relevant to them. The Stamford High students discussed gang violence, the Thokozani

students discussed wealth inequality, and the Southgate students discussed education opportunities. This meant that the questions I asked were slightly different for each focus group. I did not start the discussion with reference to South African history, and these discussions at times did not refer to history but rather focused on other explanations for South Africa's social circumstances.

The final interviews that I had with the students lasted between 30 and 90 minutes depending on how many students participated at any one time. For some of the students, scheduling considerations meant that these interviews took place in January 2019, at the beginning of their Grade 10 school year. Among the Thokozani students, Zintle and Anathi had left the school to continue their Grade 10 elsewhere. Anathi had, by coincidence, moved to Stamford High School and so I was able to interview her there. I was told by classmates that Zintle had moved to a school in the Northern Suburbs, however her phone number was no longer working, and I was not able to make contact with her.

During the last interviews I revisited some of the questions that I asked in the first interview in order to see whether there had been any substantial change in student opinions between Term 2 and Term 4 regarding history that they felt was personally relevant. I then focused the discussion on how the students felt that apartheid had affected them personally. Interestingly, I found that I got very different answers if I asked, "how has apartheid affected you?" and "how would your life be different if apartheid had never happened?" When I asked the first question many students replied that apartheid did not affect them at all because they were born after apartheid ended, however when I asked the second question many students spoke about the contemporary legacies of apartheid – positive and negative – on their lives. If the students spoke about ways in which apartheid had affected their lives, I probed by asking them to explain exactly how this was the case - what Wittenberg calls "the mechanism" (2015). Unlike the focus groups where I was interested in how the students explained – in reference to history or not – contemporary South African issues, the last interview was asking them to engage directly with South African history and its legacies.

Part Three: Approach to Analysis

In Part Three I discuss the ways in which I analyzed the data in order to understand how Grade 9 history students in Cape Town constructed historical legacies and learned to think about the relationship between the past and the present in the context of their history lessons.

Analyzing Classroom Observations

Analysis of the classroom observation data began almost as soon as I entered the field site. I routinely read and re-read my notes from previous observations in order to help think about the themes I was interested in for future data collection. This approach is what LeCompte (LeCompte M., 2013, p. 65) has called “recursivity”; researchers explore their data both from “top down” (deductively, using predefined coding categories for analysis) and from “bottom up” (inductively, developing newly identified codes/analytic categories). This spiraling recursive process allowed me to respond to variation and contradiction in the field, altering my explanatory theories so that they remained congruent with reality as it occurred in the classrooms. Throughout this recursive process I tried to cultivate a “sense of creative, even playful, engagement” (Rapley, 2010, p. 337) with my data, which meant embracing the questions the data posed as well as the answers.

This recursive approach is perhaps best illustrated through various writing exercises which helped develop my ideas during the data collection process, and which Rapley describes as “an essential practice at all stages of the analytic trajectory” (Rapley, 2010, p. 345). Quite early during data collection I wrote “classroom portraits” which focused on using the small observation details from my fieldwork to create a portrait of the classroom cultures, and how they related to the teacher and student identities. This approach allowed me to take perspective and reflect on my broader impressions of the context in which historical legacies were being discussed and negotiated. Throughout data collection I would re-read and re-write parts of these portraits, adding to them as the nuance and understanding grew. Extracts from

these portraits are included in the findings chapters. The portraits also helped me to identify areas where my understanding was lacking, and thus shaped the questions that were asked during interviews.

After the fieldwork finished I transcribed my handwritten field notes which made them easier to code and gave me an opportunity to read through the field notes of each class in depth, in consecutive order, and with greater comparative perspective. The process of reading through these field notes multiple times was important for my analysis approach. It helped me to not only reflect on my experiences in the classroom from a distance, but also helped to evoke memories of events which I hadn't considered important at the time, but which in hindsight had great relevance for the project.

I used NVivo to code the field notes. During the first wave of coding I simply identified every instance in which a relationship between the past and present was evoked, either by the teacher or a student in the class. This helped to give a sense of how often this relationship was spoken about in each class, with Thokozani's class speaking about it very infrequently, and John May's class speaking about it very frequently. I then did a second wave of coding, which categorized the first codes into ways of speaking about the relationship between past and present. Seven codes emerged from this second wave. They were:

1. Presence: The past is present in the present
2. Personal recollection: Memories from the past
3. Value comparisons: The past is better/worse than the present
4. Heritage: Ideas about where we come from
5. Examples/Analogies: Using examples from other times or places to illustrate a point from history
6. Causal: The present is the way it is *because* of the past

7. Call to action: History should make us do certain things in the present

Codes number 5 and 6 relate to Wittenberg's (Wittenberg, 2015) conceptualization of legacies, and became the focus of the study. By drawing on Wittenberg's (Wittenberg, 2015) conceptualization of the various components of historical legacies – outcome, antecedent, and mechanism – I was able to distinguish instances in which teachers and students were referring to legacy constructions, as opposed to other relationships between past and present. As discussed in Chapter 2, this study is most interested in the construction of causal legacies, since these have the greatest relevance for transitional justice. I therefore decided to re-focus the analysis once again, this time on the ways in which causal relationships were spoken about and read over the “causal” codes from each class to gain a comparative perspective across the four schools.

I was also interested in whether teachers spoke about the past as being the same as the present – what I termed “continuous” – or whether they spoke about the past as different from the present – what I termed “discontinuous”. I was persuaded of the analytic importance of this distinction by Teeger, who referred to her White participants as employing a “narrative logic of rupture” (Teeger, 2014, pg. 71). I felt that this distinction would help me to understand whether the teachers view contemporary South Africa as having ‘moved on’ or distanced itself from the apartheid past, or whether they saw contemporary South Africa as still being very rooted in the past. I therefore went back to the original codes of “relationship between past and present” and categorized those codes again according to whether those were “continuous” or “discontinuous” relationships.

Within each of the “continuous” or “discontinuous” codes, I then coded for whether this relationship was spoken about as either positive or negative. An example of a “continuous/positive” statement might be “We now have Student Representative Councils thanks to Biko”. A “continuous/negative” statement might be “Black people still feel inferior because of how they were treated in the past.” A “discontinuous/positive” statement might be “We are no longer racially discriminated against on our

identity documents”, while a “discontinuous/negative” statement might be, “Living expenses have increased since apartheid times.” This coding helped to identify trends in the nature of the relationship between past and present that the teacher evoked. It produced clear distinctions between the kinds of statements that were made in different classrooms. John May, for example, was the only class to make “discontinuous/negative” statements, while the Thokozani class only made “continuous” statements.

Analyzing Student Interviews

The student interviews were also analyzed recursively, since the later interviews depended on a close review and interpretation of earlier interviews to produce a more nuanced set of questions (Wengraf, 2004). However the final stage of the analysis was done at some distance in time and space from the field.

I recorded all of the student interviews and focus groups. I transcribed the focus groups myself, since it was important to be able to accurately distinguish the identities of the student voices. However, I outsourced the transcription of the interviews to a professional company and then checked them myself.

Having listened and read the interviews multiple times in order to familiarize myself with the discussions, I realized that very different and often contradictory ideas were articulated in the same focus group, despite the fact that the students did not openly disagree with each other. I therefore began the analysis of the student interviews by disaggregating the focus groups and creating individual student portraits, so that I could better understand the world view of each individual student. I did this by creating two lists for each student; a list of their biographical details, and a list of statements that they made about history and the way the world works.

This disaggregation was important for three reasons. First, it helped me to identify the similarities and differences even between students, even in the same class. Second, it helped me to identify whether the claims that the students were making were similar or different to the ones that their teacher made in

class. And third, it helped me to better identify how a student's life circumstances might factor into their world view. For example, in an interview Thandiwe spoke about how her father had fifteen children with seven different women, and in a focus group she said she thought that Black people were poor because they had so many unplanned pregnancies.

In the second stage of the analysis I identified topics of conversation relating to contemporary social issues in South Africa that emerged from the focus group conversations. As stated above, these included gang violence, educational access, poverty, and unemployment, none of which had been explicitly discussed during class-time. I then made lists of all the different explanations that the students in a focus group gave for these contemporary social issues. This helped me to understand to what extent the students were drawing on historical explanations versus other types of explanations, and how these explanations differed between students and classes.

Analyzing Teacher Interviews

The teacher interviews were often many hours long and covered a broad range of topics, from school culture, pedagogy, and teachers' biographies, to the purposes of history education and reflections on my data collection. I therefore decided not to transcribe these recordings, but rather take notes while listening to each interview multiple times.

In some regards the teacher interviews can be seen as a means of analysis themselves, since I invited the teachers to become co-researchers and reflect on the data with me. Through these exchanges – questions, points of resistance, clarifications, and rejections – the teachers enriched the data and helped to develop interpretations of what was happening in the classroom. The second teacher interview in particular was very reflexive, and blurred the boundary between data collection and analysis.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the research design and methodological approaches taken as I sought to understand the construction of historical legacies among Grade 9 students in South African history classrooms. I have argued that ethnographic case studies of four classrooms, during which I observed every history lesson of Grade 9 classes over ten months, was the most suitable approach to investigating the construction of historical legacies given both the nature of historical legacies, and the ways in which ideas regarding legacies of apartheid are shared in classroom spaces. I have furthermore argued that the interviews and focus groups that I conducted with teachers and students over the course of the fieldwork provided an important space to reflect upon and analyze the classroom teaching and interactions, and to explore how the students thought about contemporary South African society and its relationship with the apartheid past.

I now turn to Chapter Five, and discuss the findings from the first case study; Stamford High School.

Chapter 5

Case Study 1: Historical Legacies at Stamford High School

Introduction

“I don’t want to offend anyone but I think Mandela was a fraud,” announces Ntando.

It’s the end of term, and Mr. Richardson is wrapping up the curriculum to turn his attention towards summer exam preparation. After nine months in this history class I’m not surprised by Ntando’s comment. It’s representative both of his political views, and a classroom culture which promotes critical reflection on legacies of apartheid.

Indeed, the comment was not even uninvited. Mr. Richardson was facilitating a conversation on the factors that led to the end of apartheid, and The Free Mandela Campaign was mentioned. “There were songs and artwork written about freeing Mandela”, he explains, “So I wanted to open it up because I know in the other class some people found it problematic that Mandela was the focus and other people were not mentioned.” But invited or not, Mr. Richardson is not prepared for quite such a radical historical revisionism;

“Mandela wasn’t really in prison,” Ntando stands up to explain; “He spent time in a farm and then the apartheid government wanted it to look like he came out of jail. He was just a front for the apartheid government.” This betrayal, he continues, was one of the reasons why the apartheid government secured such a good deal during the negotiations, and why Black people are still struggling today.

I – along with the rest of the class – are looking at Ntando with surprise, and then all at once turn to Mr. Richardson. How will he respond to such a direct contradiction of the historical narrative he has

just offered, I wonder? Is it possible, as a White teacher, to tell a Black student that this historical legacy – the way Ntando interprets the present in reference to the past – is wrong, and that he has misunderstood the historical reasons for his own subjugation?

Mr. Richardson pauses, arms crossed, looks at Ntando and thinks carefully what to say. “That’s very interesting,” he concludes, “It’s not what I had heard but I’ll need to look into it.”

Chapter Structure

This chapter addresses the question of how students in a Grade 9 history classroom at Stamford High School learn to construct historical legacies. It furthermore seeks to explore how the students in Dan Richardson’s class construct explanations for contemporary South African social issues – such as the racialized inequality described in the vignette above – and whether the history they learn is a feature in those explanations.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part One I offer thick ethnographic descriptions of Stamford High School, as well as ethnographic biographies of two students and their history teacher. The purpose of these ethnographic descriptions is to offer context to the study, in the understanding that teaching and learning are heavily influenced by the environment in which they occur, and the personal life histories of those who participate. How historical legacies are constructed by both the teacher and students is therefore influenced by the cultural ecosystem of the classroom, set within the wider school and community culture.

Part Two of this chapter concentrates on the way in which historical legacies were constructed by the teacher and understood by the students. As explored in Chapter Two, I conceptualize historical legacies as being constructed from a contemporary “outcome”, a past “antecedent” and a causal “mechanism”

which connects the outcome and antecedent (Wittenberg, 2015). I seek to understand how the relationship between the past and the present is constructed by the teacher during his history lessons, and how students both explain the present, and reflect upon legacies of the past.

Part One

School Portrait

The architecture of Stamford High is simple but pleasant. Located in a leafy residential area of an upmarket majority-White suburb, you could be forgiven for thinking that you were in London or Boston. The minibus taxi drops me on Main Road, and I walk the five minutes past large detached houses, until I reach the gates of Stamford High. This is the only school in my sample which does not have a security guard, but rather an electric lock and a doorbell which is controlled by the receptionist. As I walk through the gate I pass a small playground where a teacher facilitates a game of basketball with a group of boys.

Once inside the building however it becomes clear where I am. A large map of Cape Town pinned to the wall catches my eye. The map is covered in hundreds of colorful pins, each representing the neighborhood where a student lives, and each attached to a thread reaching back to the big red pin that is Stamford High School. The work that has gone into creating such a display must have been painstaking. The students come from all over Cape Town; north of the Northern Suburbs, east of Khayelitsha township, all the way down the Cape Peninsula. They represent every type of formal or informal settlement and are distributed throughout every “color” of neighborhood.

The map is a testament to the diversity of Stamford High, but also to the sacrifices that are made to send a child to a school like this, over such long distances and at such great expense. I imagine students from Muizenberg, Blouberg, Mannenberg, Mitchells Plain, Philippi, Delft, Hannover Park, Gugulethu, taking

cars, taxis and buses to school each morning, some with a two-hour commute. Yet wherever they come from, they all walk past the same large detached houses to school, with SUVs parked outside.

What do Stamford students think of the people who live in these houses, and the racialized inequality that plagues their country? And most pertinent for the focus of this research, how do they draw on their history to explain it?

Stamford High School is a Math and Science focused school. This means that students do not have the opportunity to take History beyond Grade 9. The school is approximately half Coloured students, and half Black students, however just under half of the teaching staff, including the principal and deputy principal, are White. The school fees are R7000 a year, but no student is denied a place due to lack of funds. In a situation where a student cannot afford the fees, the school relies on charitable donations.

The school is only eight years old. It was developed as part of a provincial government project, which recognized that while the Western Cape had established many new schools, few have been academically successful. Stamford High was an attempt to buck this trend by doing something different. The school was ‘seeded’ from Parkwood High; an expensive, prestigious, and high-performing formerly all-White school which neighbors Stamford High. Parkwood High teachers moved to Stamford High, and the leadership team from Parkwood High worked closely with the new school. Math teachers from Stamford High, for example, would join the weekly departmental meetings at Parkwood High during the first year. Indeed, the current principal of Stamford High is the son of a former Parkwood High principal. The timetable, syllabus, code of conduct rules, and worksheets were taken directly from Parkwood High and implemented wholesale at Stamford High, with the intention that as the new school grew, Stamford High could adapt what they were given to better suit the new school culture. The extent to which Stamford High has sufficiently adapted Parkwood High resources and culture is a matter of debate among staff.

Stamford High School is highly selective, with only 1 in 20 applicants securing a place. The application procedure is long, and the principal personally interviews every student who meets a set of baseline criteria. The top 20% of successful candidates are chosen regardless of their family income level, but the following 80% of candidates are selected only from low-income families. While the school was primarily established to serve low-income students with strong academic potential, the school management team believes that the school requires a critical mass of middle-class students to create a stable culture of learning. The principal also talks about looking for the 'X' factor when he interviews students, meaning that he does not select only according to grades but also for diversity of all kinds.

The school performs very well, last year coming 8th in the Western Cape Province. Despite this strong academic performance and relatively low fees, there is not a single White student enrolled at Stamford High. Dan Richardson – the history teacher whose class I observe – believes that no White student must have applied, since the principal's interest in racial diversity would have increased the likelihood that a White applicant would be given a place. The students in my focus group think that White students do not apply because they would rather go to schools with better extra-curricular options. Stamford High, in contrast to schools like Parkwood High, lacks resources such as sports fields and musical equipment.

There have also been concerns among the staff that the school, by virtue of taking much of its structure from Parkwood High, has a White culture that can be exclusionary of non-White people. Mr. Richardson admitted that there have been instances of unhappiness among Coloured teachers who feel left out in the staffroom. Teachers tend to stick to their own racial groups and Mr. Richardson acknowledged the difficulty that he finds in bridging those cultural differences.

The principal of Stamford High was recently interviewed on the topic of transformation⁷. He spoke about how students had raised the concern that there were no Black staff members, despite 50% of the student

⁷ Transformation, in the context of South Africa, refers to efforts undertaken to increase race, gender, and class diversity within institutions and society.

body identifying as Black. When it came to hiring four new teachers the following year, the school leadership committed to hiring at least two Black teachers. During the first assembly of the new school year the principal introduced these new teachers, and the students spontaneously erupted in applause. This applause was considered evidence that the students do notice and do care about issues of transformation; racial identity does matter.

Stamford High School has its own resident anthropologist. Gary Sloan is a science teacher, while at the same time completing his PhD at the University of Cape Town. His research looks at the seeding process - how Stamford High's culture developed from Parkwood High's. The presentation of this research at various staff meetings has offered space for critical reflection on school culture among the staff. Gary was very critical of the seeding process, arguing that the culture of Stamford High was "White" and therefore disadvantaged low-income, non-White students.

For example, Stamford High mirrored Parkwood in its decision to hire only one school counsellor, however the social issues facing Stamford High students mean that at least two counsellors are required. Similarly, a typical punishment at Parkwood High is after-school detention. However, Stamford High students often have to travel long distances on public transport to return home, and after school detention makes this expensive and dangerous. Gary was reflecting on how the school leadership only recently realized that the minibus-taxi fare increases during rush hour, meaning that detention becomes a financial strain on low-income families. The lack of insight into the lived reality of many of their students came as a shock to the staff.

The rotation of teachers was another cultural difference that Gary identified. Currently at Stamford High, as in Parkwood High, students have a different form teacher each year, and often have an entirely different set of subject teachers. In Parkwood High this quick rotation mitigates the likelihood that wealthy 'high-maintenance' parents will complain if they are dissatisfied with an individual teacher. However at Stamford High School, Gary felt that students would benefit from more continuity, which

would allow trust to develop between students and their teachers. This is particularly important given that many students face challenges at home which require intense pastoral support.

One of the issues that Gary raised in our conversations was that the poorer students often feel embarrassed. Although the school offers free bread to students at break and lunchtime, few students have felt confident enough to accept. Slowly this attitude is changing, noted Gary, as other teachers, particularly Black and Coloured, encourage the students not to feel ashamed and to take what they need.

Gary's criticism of Stamford High – that it retains a “White culture” – was noted by many of the students that I interviewed. One student commented;

“When I came here I was like, ‘oh, this is a White school’, but then I came and I was like, ‘okay, this is like there are no Whites here’ and I was like ‘okay’.”

However, the students believed that their school's reputation for being “White” was a result of racial stereotypes rather than school culture and policy;

“They actually think that since Stamford High is in the top schools, they think it's a White school. But it's actually Black and Coloured people at the school achieving those achievements.”

“White people lived in nice areas and posh areas. That's how come they think that if you go to an area that's posh like Stamford, you go to a White school, when it's not actually White.”

The parents of the students at Stamford High School, for the most part, seemed to have a deep commitment to education. The lengthy application process is in itself a test of the parents' involvement. Mr. Richardson confessed to me that he sometimes felt embarrassed by how much respect the parents showed him. He gave an example of a father taking a morning off work to come and discuss a minor issue that could have been discussed over the phone. However, in conversations with various staff members at the school I noted a distinction that they made between the parents of low-income students

who show deference to the teachers, and the parents of middle-income students – most often “Coloured” – who they found to be demanding and rude.

My introduction to Stamford High School was perhaps the most straightforward of all the schools. I phoned the receptionist, explained why I was calling, and was put straight through to Mr. Richardson, as the head of history. We spoke on the phone briefly, I explained the research, and we arranged to meet the following week.

Mr. Richardson agreed to participate in the research on condition that the principal – Mr. Hinton – also agreed. Mr. Hinton's response was welcoming but he also emphasized the importance he placed on protecting his staff and students' time. This was reflective of the various ways in which he defended the school culture and ethos. It was part of what made him such a popular school leader. For example, the Western Cape Education Department had recently planned to double the student intake of Stamford High, given the academic success that it enjoyed. Mr. Hinton, in consultation with the teachers, resisted this decision, and instead negotiated a more gradual expansion to ensure that the culture of the school would be retained. The year before I arrived at the school Mr. Hinton was facing exhaustion and had planned to resign, but the teachers and the board of governors had instead encouraged him to take a six-month sabbatical so as not to lose such a well-liked leader.

Once permission had been granted by the school I presented the research to the class to ensure that each student had the option to opt-out. The Grade 9 class engaged thoughtfully with my questions. They had an impressive understanding of what an ethnographic researcher does, and one student asked why I wanted to be an anthropologist and do this kind of research. When I asked whether the students had any questions they wanted to ask me, Aphiwe shyly inquired what age I was.

My first impressions of the Grade 9 class were reinforced throughout the year. They were extremely intelligent and articulate, and some of the students had a vast array of general knowledge and political understanding. At times, while waiting in the queue to enter the classroom, students struck up

conversations with me about American politics, or perceptions of South Africa among British people. They were also, for the most part, passionate about studying history and felt that it was an important part of their heritage which they spoke about with parents.

The Grade 9 students that I interviewed were positive about their school. They felt the quality of teaching was very good, that the teachers cared about them, and that the students were generally united. One of the aspects of the school that most struck the students was how the school made sure that money was not a barrier for anyone. Saara, who was part of the focus group commented,

“The minute I came to the orientation day at the school they were like, ‘We are all equal in the school. No one is better than no one and we are here to help you on the first day of school so don’t feel intimidated by anyone’, or things like that. And that’s basically the principle that I like. We are all here because we come for school education. No matter where you come from, no matter how poor you are, how rich you are, what lifestyle you live and things like that. We are all here for an education.”

The students spoke passionately about how their friendships transcended the color barrier, explaining how amaXhosa students will share isiXhosa words with their Coloured friends, and Coloured students will teach Afrikaans words to their amaXhosa friends. In the focus group they spoke about how the school celebrates Heritage Day⁸ by allowing the students to come to school dressed in outfits that reflect their heritage. They explained that some of the students would wear an outfit reflecting a friend’s heritage. For example a Christian student would wear a shalwar kameez and would even attend mosque with his Muslim friends on that day. The focus group invited me to attend their Heritage Day assembly so that I could see the various outfits. I gladly attended and it was genuinely heart-warming to see the diversity, as well as how the students interpreted – or perhaps mocked – ‘heritage’; two students for

⁸ Heritage Day is a South African public holiday celebrated on 24 September. On this day, South Africans are encouraged to celebrate their culture and the diversity of their beliefs and traditions, in the wider context of a nation that belongs to all its people.

example dressed up as goths, and one dressed in his pajamas. Mr. Richardson dressed in an English football kit as he joked, “White people don’t really have culture”.

Interestingly, the students’ expressions of racial unity diverged from the teachers’ impressions of the school’s racial dynamics. When I told Mr. Richardson that the students in his class seemed to feel very racially integrated, he said rather cynically that that would change as they grew up. According to the staff there are strong racial tensions among the older years, and the Coloured students and Black students typically do not spend time together. This tension is exacerbated, explained Mr. Richardson, by the fact that Coloured students tend to academically outperform Black students, probably because they tended to come from better-resourced families. The Grade 11 students in particular, according to Mr. Richardson and Gary, are extremely unsatisfied with the school. At the Heritage Day assembly, two Grade 11 students were invited to give a speech. They used the opportunity to talk about the importance of mental health and of loving yourself, while at the same time jibing the school for causing mental health difficulties. The one criticism of the school that all students agreed on was the heavy workload and the pressure that exerts.

History Teacher: Dan Richardson

3rd May 2018, the first day of observations in Mr. Richardson’s history class. I take my seat at the back, smiling at the students as I pass them standing behind their desks, willing myself to look approachable. On the whiteboard, in large letters, are written “Capitalism” and “Communism”.

Mr. Richardson stands at the front, anxiously waiting for the students to file in. He closes the door and there’s a brief moment of silence as everyone settles down. “Good Afternoon Grade 9s.” “Good afternoon Sir”, they reply in unison, followed by scraping and shuffling as they pull out their chairs and take their books from their bags. ‘Should I have also waited to sit?’ I ask myself. In these early stages

of the fieldwork every minor decision feels like the forging of great allegiances, positioning myself closer to the students or the teacher.

It quickly becomes clear that I've wandered into this class half-way through a lesson. The students open their books and start writing. "You made a lot of interesting points last week," Mr. Richardson reminds them, "But are there any thoughts in general? Write them down, don't overthink. There's no right or wrong answers." The students are quiet and focused, as Mr. Richardson paces between the desks, reading over the students' shoulders and nodding.

I look around the classroom. It is new and bright, with one wall all windows looking out onto treetops, and the other three walls decorated with movie posters and student election posters that his English class must have designed. The desks are in rows of two, all facing the whiteboard and projector at the front of the room.

"Four more minutes", announces Mr. Richardson.

I study the faces of the students, looking for patterns in their seating arrangements. Isn't this what anthropologists do? They look for social patterns. But I'm disappointed. Apart from six students wearing hijabs, sitting together in the opposite corner bent over their workbooks, it all looks very random. So I count the students instead. 31 in total, and I tentatively identify 11 as being Black.

Mr. Richardson begins; "I'm interested to hear what some of you have written." But there are no volunteers. "Kelly? No?" Kelly doesn't want to answer. Eventually someone plucks up the courage; "Communism is seen as a way to control people. Capitalism is good because it gives people free will." The teacher makes encouraging noises and sums up their answer. Another student offers, "Communism is a great idea but it opens up doors for corruption from the government. Capitalism is also a good idea for growing the economy, but it increases inequality." Once again some more encouragement. Slowly

the answers start to roll; “You receive what you can if you work hard... money makes life easier... it could have benefited everyone if implemented properly... it doesn’t benefit poor families...”

Mr. Richardson praises each answer in turn, and then asks, “What is democracy?”

“A system where you chose to vote for a party”, calls out a student.

“And what if Communism is a democracy?” poses the teacher.

“Yes!!” the class shouts, followed by the excited suggestion, “You can change the party if they are greedy!”

Dan Richardson is in his early 30s and the only teacher in my sample who was teaching students entirely different from his own racial demographic. He was also the only teacher in my sample too young to have directly experienced apartheid. Mr. Richardson had previously taught for three years at an elite, formerly-White, all-boys school, as a requirement of his PGCE scholarship, but hated the culture which he described as macho and aggressive. He then taught as a temporary teacher for six months at a middle-class school, before coming to Stamford High a few years before I met him.

Mr. Richardson was actually an English teacher with qualifications to teach history. He admitted that he only studied a few modules of history at university and didn’t feel very confident teaching it. His strategy therefore was to develop lessons closely around the textbook. Despite this, he was the head of history at Stamford High, as there were only two history teachers in the school and the other was head of pastoral support.

Mr. Richardson held his students to very high standards. When students did not submit their oral history projects on time they were met with exasperated looks and an automatic deduction of two marks. At the same time, he behaved like an older brother teasing and affirming his younger siblings. “That’s not the

reason,” he joked when a student thought the Cold War referred to low temperatures, “but LOL nonetheless”. When Deborah sprawled over her desk and dramatically announced that she hated history, Mr. Richardson rolled his eyes and laughed. And when students were required to record their oral history projects as a vlog, he offered to lend them his phone over lunch.

Although Mr. Richardson thought of his teaching style as mainstream and formulaic, I observed classes that were rich in detail, discussion, and activities. He met the students twice a week, once for 60 minutes, where he often introduced a new topic, and then again for 30 minutes where he consolidated it using questions from the textbook.

What was surprising about Mr. Richardson’s classes was the amount of detail he offered. For example, Mr. Richardson was the only history teacher that I observed who explained what the Bantustans were, and how the Chiefs were controlled by the apartheid government. He was also the only teacher who spoke about Satyagraha, and Gandhi’s influence on non-violent resistance in South Africa. He often seemed stressed, and on a number of occasions wondered how he would have time to cover all the sections in the textbook. “The other teachers don’t talk about any of this stuff”, I once ventured, and Mr. Richardson looked shocked; “But it’s in the textbook!”

A common theme in our conversations was how to live a socially just life while being White in South Africa. After class one day I mentioned to Mr. Richardson that the students really enjoyed Heritage Day as an opportunity to dress in outfits associated with their friends’ heritages. “My first instinct is to think that that’s lovely,” he replied, “but I have a sister-in-law at UCT who I feel might tell me that it’s cultural appropriation.” Over coffee, Gary suggested that teachers be given time to do home visits with their students’ parents, and to emphasize to the parents the importance of creating desk space in their homes. Mr. Richardson felt very uncomfortable at the idea of going into poor people’s shacks and telling them how they should support their children. It was also clear from that meeting that Mr. Richardson drew meaning from teaching low-income students. He was surprised to learn from Gary that actually 20% of

Stamford High students are admitted regardless of income; “I’ve been telling everyone I teach low-income kids!”

The students really liked Mr. Richardson and identified him as “not a racist”. In one focus group I asked how they felt being taught apartheid history by a White person. The students unanimously agreed that it was a positive thing, for two reasons. The first was that the presence of a White teacher adds diversity to the school, and the second was that learning about apartheid history from a White person added a perspective that they did not receive from home. Since their Black and Coloured parents taught them about apartheid, it was quite unusual and intriguing for them to hear about it through a White lens. Months later, after the interviews had been transcribed, I sent Mr. Richardson some of these anonymized compliments because I felt he needed the affirmation.

Personal histories of students

Aphiwe

The resistance to apartheid was the bit that Mr. Richardson’s students were most looking forward to. As if to leave the best to last - the heroic conclusion to centuries of White supremacy - it came right at the end of the Grade 9 syllabus, before the final exams and the long summer break. Despite the 30-degree heat, the Grade 9 class remained engaged and alert. Mr. Richardson seized on this suspension, describing in detail how the students’ frustration that led to the 1976 Soweto Uprising had slowly developed over years of large class sizes, poorly-qualified teachers, and few resources. “It’s like you put lots of wood and petrol together,” he explains, “and then it’s just waiting for a match.” The match in this instance was of course the decision to make Afrikaans the medium of instruction.

The teacher dims the lights and projects a photo of the Soweto Uprising student protests. Crowded streets of Black children, with fists in the air, holding up placards to the camera, and dressed in the V-neck jumpers of their school uniforms. “What’s the first thing we can say about this scene?” asks Mr.

Richardson, hoping to prompt a conversation. *“Afrikaans isn’t working,” calls out a Coloured student, “because they can’t spell Afrikaans.” Mr. Richardson looks surprised, and then re-examines the photo, smiling at a detail he’s obviously never noticed. The student is right; the word “Afrikaans” is spelt incorrectly on the placards. “Well that’s ironic,” jokes Mr. Richardson, and the class laughs.*

Ntando however isn’t happy. He sits beside me at the back desk, his school bag emblazoned with “LGBT” tip-exed over the shoulder strap. “That’s not the point”, he shouts, defending the protestors, angry at the implication that they are being mocked. Aphiwe however, wades in deeper. “Some just join for fun”, he begins, and this time he attracts ire from more than just Ntando. The whole class rumbles with indignation, as their classmate undermines the legitimacy of this historic moment. Aphiwe, undeterred, pulls himself high in his chair and turns around to face the class; “Before you criticize me then listen to me,” he shouts. “Some just join for fun. They’re too young. They don’t know what they are joining. Look at the photo, they’re smiling not angry.”

Sensing the antagonism in the room, Mr. Richardson changes tack and uses this as a history teaching moment. “This is a good point about sources and what you can tell from sources,” he suggests, “it’s a dangerous thing to assume from just one picture.” Ntando interjects undeterred and shoots back at Aphiwe; “Also there are some people in Grade 12 who look like they should be in Grade 7.”

Changing tack again, Mr. Richardson moves to the next slide, a photo of the body of Hector Peterson, followed by a 5-minute video clip of an interview with Hector Peterson’s sister. The interview is chilling and moves me close to tears as she describes the moment she realized that her brother – only 13 years old – was dead. The class is completely silent. The clip comes to an end, and Mr. Richardson moves across the front of the screen to switch the lights back on.

“See I was right,” says Aphiwe, “Some students just joined along without really understanding.”

The class exhales with exasperation. “I feel at this stage it’s not about the argument but just about you being right,” says Mr. Richardson, as the bell rings.

But as the class packs up I find myself smiling, quietly impressed by Aphiwe’s stubborn-retelling of the past that positions the protestors not as heroes, but as naivetes. While I cannot say I agree with him, in his retelling is an implicit resistance to the textbook narrative of good vs. evil.

Aphiwe was the most enthusiastic student in my sample, often requesting to be interviewed more frequently than the research design required. A sincere young man who identified as Xhosa, he was born in Cape Town and was being raised by his single mother without contact from his father. His mother worked as a flight sergeant in the South African army, and his older brother was studying accounting at the University of Cape Town.

For most of his life Aphiwe grew up in Gugulethu, a large township on the outskirts of Cape Town. However, he recently moved with his mother and brother to Maitland – a lower-middle-class neighborhood to the north of the city. In an interview he said his mother wanted to move “because she was angry or upset about something, she just wanted to live in her own house,” coupled with a desire to live in a quieter – and presumably less violent – neighborhood. However Aphiwe felt ambivalent about this move; “it was actually nice moving back to Gugulethu,” he explained, “because I used to play with my cousins and aunts and socialize more. But where we’re living in Maitland with my mother and my brother... it’s actually a bit quiet.”

One of Aphiwe’s most striking characteristics was his interest and passion for history. Even before he studied the apartheid modules with Mr. Richardson, Aphiwe’s knowledge of this period was impressive. His uncle was a history teacher, and Aphiwe told me that during the weekends he would spend time reading the history teacher guides. He also watched many history documentaries, citing a series on

apartheid that was prepared in honor of Mandela's 100th birthday. When, during an interview, Aphiwe learned that the BBC was also reporting on land reform debates in South Africa, he asked if I could send him these news articles.

I was amused on one occasion when interviewing Aphiwe and Saara. I asked the two students if there was anything they'd seen in the news recently that related to the history they had been learning. Saara spoke about Palestine and how the creation of Israel was related to World War Two. "Can you repeat the point?" asked Aphiwe, and I began to repeat the question. "I understand the question," he interrupted, "but can you explain Palestine?" I stalled for a moment – what do I know about the Palestinian conflict? – before deferring to Saara; "Do you want to explain because maybe you know better?"

Amir

On the morning of the school exchange it was difficult to tell who was more nervous, me or the three students from John May High who I had just picked up, and who were now going to spend a day at Stamford High. I had never met these students before since they were not part of the class that I observed; their teacher had identified them as polite and well-deserving of an interesting day out. As we drove the 20 minutes together from John May High to Stamford High I tried to make conversation with these shy yet undeniably polite 14-year-olds. However, the car eventually lapsed into awkward silence.

Arriving at the school gates we were buzzed into the reception area, where I was anxious to introduce the exchange students to their hosts. I had a lot of confidence in the students from my Stamford High focus group to make these guests feel welcome, just as they had for me. However I was particularly grateful to see Amir arrive first, his gentle sloping walk down the stairs, and unassuming hands-in-pockets as he asked if he should "take them to math class now, ma'am?" I waved goodbye to the exchange students like an anxious parent on the first day of school, and promised to meet them back at reception at break time.

I had anticipated Amir being a gracious host. His gentleness and deep sincerity made him Mr. Richardson's favorite student. His role among his friends seemed to be peace-maker. However I hadn't anticipated how much Stamford High meant to Amir. During the break Amir offered to give the exchange students a tour of the school. I traipsed along behind them, also curious to see more than the reception area and Mr. Richardson's history classroom.

Amir's tour was proud and thorough. He took us to every classroom, pointing out with special attention the computer labs which had been locked not only with a door but also a security gate, and the mural in the science corridor which had been painted by a group of UCT volunteers. Although the school didn't own any sports grounds – these were borrowed from the private primary school next door – it did have a swimming pool which had been covered over and was full of leaves. Amir couldn't tell us why it wasn't in use, but having a pool was a proud boast, nonetheless. "When the school gets better resources", he told me, "it will be able to charge more school fees." The fact that Stamford High had been intentionally designed as a low-fee school was not a consideration.

I had wondered how Amir would interact with the John May High students, since all identified as Coloured, and all came from similar neighborhoods. The only difference was the quality of their education; Stamford High was highly selective and academically high-performing while John May High was not. At one point the exchange students referred to Stamford High as a "White school", because the students spoke with more anglicized accents, and with less slang; their point, poorly disguised, was that Stamford High was posh.

Amir however showed no arrogance throughout the exchange, as though his good fortune to attend a school like Stamford High had nothing to do with him. Rather, he saw his school as evidence that the segregation of the apartheid era was ending, and that he was simply reaping its benefits. Before the Group Areas Act, Amir told me, his parents had gone to a good mixed-race school in District Six. In the 1970s they had been forcibly moved to a "bad school" in Bonteheuwel. Now Amir was picking up where

his parents left off. When I asked him whether apartheid continued to affect him, he pointed to Stamford High as evidence that it didn't; "We have schools like this," he explained.

Amir was the first student from his history class to return his consent form and volunteered to do an interview that same afternoon. On subsequent occasions when I invited him for an interview he was always available. Although Amir never spoke directly about his family situation, Mr. Richardson confided that Amir's mother suffered poor mental health, and that his father only stayed in the marriage to retain custody of his children. Mr. Richardson speculated that Amir's desire to stay in school for as long as possible might be due to his turbulent home life. Often when I was at Stamford High after school hours, I would bump into Amir.

Amir was not very familiar with his family history, except that his great grandfather on his mother's side had travelled to South Africa from India. Indeed Amir expressed an explicit desire to not learn more about his ancestry in case he discovered something painful. He was worried, for example, that he might be descended from slaves. Despite his Indian heritage, Amir self-identified as Coloured due to his customs and accent. He furthermore identified as Muslim yet felt that Coloured people didn't have much history.

Amir did not enjoy the same passion for history as Aphiwe did, however he would speak to his father about apartheid. On one occasion Amir had a dream about apartheid, where he witnessed a White man beating a Black man. When he recounted this dream to his father, his father said that that was exactly what apartheid was like. A particularly striking image that Amir spoke about was his father's experience of watching Black men under apartheid running after cars begging White men to give them employment. The desperation of these men seemed to have made a deep impact on Amir.

Racial diversity and the celebration of cultural diversity was a theme that often arose when speaking with Amir. Like many of the students at Stamford High School, Amir spoke warmly about the diversity that he encountered at school, however unlike the other students he did not feel that there was any racial tension between the Black and Coloured students. Rather he felt that they were very united, and that this reflected South Africa as a Rainbow Nation. Amir furthermore described with great enthusiasm the annual Food Fair at Stamford High, where students were asked to bring in a dish that reflected their cultural cuisine. He loved the Heritage Day celebrations where students were invited to come to school dressed in their traditional clothes. When describing the clothes that the amaXhosa students wore, Amir mentioned five times how “nice” and “beautiful” they were. I wondered whether this was an attempt to compensate for any hint of racial tension.

The desire to be open-minded can perhaps be explained by Amir’s relationship with his parents. Indeed, he credits his father as opposed to his mother for this approach, saying that;

“My mother, ma’am, she tells me, “don’t get involved with any people”, whatever. But my father says “you must just try to talk to people, or be open-minded about them.” So I took my father’s advice, ma’am. Because I wanted to try it out.”

Amir furthermore went on to say how successful this approach had been. He had learned a lot from his Black friends, most notably in regard to the experiences of their parents and grandparents under apartheid, which he felt shaped their outlook on life. On one occasion, Amir recounts, two of his friends were arguing over whose race was “better”. This upset Amir and he shouted at them to stop. While other students expressed anger at various racial or historical injustices, Amir never expressed an opinion that might imply or result in racial division.

Despite there being no White students at Stamford High, Amir referred to the school as a “White School” due to its relationship with Parkwood High. Although Amir felt that in principle it is not good to be racially segregated, he admitted that being in a school that catered to less-wealthy students was more

comfortable. He imagined that it would be easier to “belong” at Stamford High School than Parkwood High.

Implications for the study

The ethnographic descriptions offered in Part One provide a context for analysis and discussion of the ways in which historical consciousness was discussed in the classroom. Stamford High had several unusual characteristics which influenced the style of engagement within history lessons.

The students at Stamford High, for example, were unusually academically high-achieving and as such there was greater commitment to learning than in some of the other case study schools. This meant that a greater amount of class time was spent on the history curriculum, and there was a greater degree of class participation. The extent to which students were familiar with South African history even before studying the apartheid modules was also unusual, and again this characteristic lent itself to a deeper level of reflection on historical legacies.

This was the only case study class where the teacher was of a different racial demographic to all his students. Among the students, there was a relatively even divide of Black and Coloured students, and indeed an unusual number of Black non-South African students. There was therefore no obviously racialized school identity, and no inevitable racialized historical master narrative. However, the racial diversity in the school - and the school’s heightened awareness of racial tensions and dynamics - was reflected in classroom engagement.

Mr. Richardson was the most junior of the four history teachers, and the only teacher who did not meaningfully experience apartheid. This meant that he lacked confidence when teaching the apartheid modules, and so was often open to suggestion or correction from his students. However, it also meant that unlike other teachers, Mr. Richardson didn’t have a strong emotional attachment to, or invested

interest in, events that occurred under apartheid. The tone of the class was therefore more objective; unlike the other teachers, little emotion was evoked.

While these characteristics do not make a certain engagement with legacy thinking or legacy constructions inevitable, they may help to frame the analysis below.

Part Two

In Part Two I describe the ways in which historical legacies were constructed and negotiated in the classroom, and in doing so I seek to understand how students learned to think about the relationship between past and present. As described in Chapter 4, I unpack this engagement with apartheid legacies first by exploring the way that Dan Richardson spoke about the relationship between the past and the present, and then by looking at how the students spoke about the relationship between the past and the present.

Regarding the way history was taught, I focus on Mr. Richardson's emphasis on history as being either continuous or discontinuous with the present, as well as to what extent past circumstances can be causally linked to present circumstances. In regard to legacy thinking I focus on how the Stamford High students explain contemporary social issues, and how the personal histories of the students as well as their history classes relate to their use of the past. I do not assume that the way historical legacies are constructed or used by the students is a direct result of the way they are taught by Mr. Richardson. Rather, I seek to explore the interactions in the classroom, and the ways in which ideas about the past and the present are expressed and mediated by both the teacher and the students.

How historical legacies are constructed by the teacher

Like all of the history teachers, Mr. Richardson referred to the relationship between the past and the present in his teaching, despite the fact that contemporary legacies of apartheid are never addressed in

the Grade 9 history curriculum, nor in the textbook that Mr. Richardson used with his students. Given the lack of prescribed content regarding historical legacies, it seems plausible to infer that the attitudes and opinions that Mr. Richardson expressed in regard to the relationship between South Africa's history and its contemporary society, as well as the decision to draw these connections, were his own. In this section I will describe how Mr. Richardson spoke about this relationship in reference to continuity and discontinuity, before then turning to look at how relationships of causality were addressed.

Continuity and Discontinuity

Throughout the year, Mr. Richardson referred to present-day South Africa as being both continuous and discontinuous with the past. By "continuous" I refer to statements that Mr. Richardson made that implicitly or explicitly suggest that present-day South Africa is the same as South Africa in the past. By "discontinuous" I refer to statements that Mr. Richardson made that implicitly or explicitly suggest that present-day South Africa is different from South Africa in the past. The following is an example of a continuous statement;

"A lot of issues that we had were Coloured kids saying that our parents' struggle isn't as heavily weighted, but Black kids saying that Black people did have less. So these discussions still exist today... We still have these divisions."

In this statement Mr. Richardson communicated to the students that the racial antagonisms that they faced in school were the same kinds of divisions that existed during apartheid.

However, an example of a discontinuous statement included; *"There's no Bantu education now."*

In these statements Mr. Richardson drew attention to attitudes or policies that existed in the past, but which no longer exist in contemporary South Africa.

In discussing the continuity of the past and the present several characteristics can be observed from Mr. Richardson's teaching. The first is that Mr. Richardson, compared to the other teachers, develops very few connections between the past and the present. Rather he tends to situate his teaching in the past, making few remarks about contemporary South Africa. On the occasions when Mr. Richardson does refer to the present, he almost always speaks about the past as being continuous with the present – what Wittenberg (Wittenberg, 2015) might refer to as an analogous legacy. Furthermore, when Mr. Richardson speaks about the past as being continuous with the present, this is without exception spoken about as being something negative. For example, Mr. Richardson speaks about how racist attitudes, racial conflicts, geographical segregation, and racialized wealth inequalities are aspects of contemporary South African society that have not changed since apartheid, and which continue to be problems. On the occasions when Mr. Richardson did describe a positive historical event – for example the effective resistance strategies of the United Democratic Front, or the first democratic elections in 1994 – he did not make a connection to contemporary South Africa.

Interestingly, Mr. Richardson expressed to his students his belief that the value of history is its continuity with the present, and that to understand contemporary South Africa one needed to understand its parallels in history. For example, Mr. Richardson foregrounded the historical roots of contemporary student protests:

The university students were influenced by Black Consciousness and Biko was their first president. They rejected Bantu education and they wanted to revive Black pride in African culture. This is not hugely important, but you should have in your mind that it filtered down. And I want to make this point because the same thing is happening now. If you look at Fees Must Fall⁹ it's having the same effect where high schools' students are saying 'hey, we're going to be at university soon and the issue of fees will affect us as will the issue of the curriculum.' So I

⁹ Fees Must Fall was the name given to a series of university student decolonization protests that demanded a reduction in university fees and resulted in the temporary closure of certain universities.

want you to pay attention because the same thing is happening now and will affect you and continue to affect you. So look at this source; I want you to think about the students' movement.

In doing so he drew a comparison between things that affected students in the past, and things that affect students now. He furthermore introduced the idea of student movements as being a legitimate form of social action, and something that he anticipated his students becoming involved in. He thus evoked a moral continuity between his students and Steve Biko. This continuity was similarly evoked in regard to ANC leaders in the following exchange:

T: Why was it so important [for the ANC] to set up a youth league? Surely [political activism] is for adults?

S: They're going to grow up to be adults. They're the future generation.

T: Yes, continuity, so that when the older ones die, then the younger ones could take over. And that was Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo, all of the big guys. Which is why it's so important for you guys to be aware of what's going on and when you go to university you know, because one day you'll be old guys and when old guys don't do anything it will be up to you. So you must be aware, like these guys.

As well as emphasizing the continuous relationship between the past and the present, Mr. Richardson tried to impress on students how recent apartheid was. For example, during one class Mr. Richardson showed his students a Facebook post from an anti-apartheid activist who was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act during apartheid, and who could therefore not attend his own wedding reception. The students were shocked to read the letter from the apartheid government which was attached to the screenshot of the Facebook post. In this letter, the man is informed by the government that his application to attend his wedding reception had been rejected. The juxtaposition of such a letter from a previous political dispensation, addressed to a man who today has a Facebook account, served to

illustrate to the students how recent apartheid was. This seemed to be Mr. Richardson's intention, as he concluded the lesson with the following comment:

"How about that? Your own wedding reception and you can't even attend it, and you have to apply to attend it. This was our world and it wasn't so long ago. This guy is still alive."

In the three instances where Mr. Richardson referred to the present as being different from the past, these differences were either of little significance to contemporary South Africa or were spoken about positively. For example, on one occasion Mr. Richardson explained that during the apartheid era people did not have Twitter and so government censorship of newspapers was a considerable barrier to accessing information. The implication of this statement was that unlike in the past, we are now less vulnerable to government propaganda and censorship. On no occasion did Mr. Richardson express regret, upset, or disapproval that contemporary South Africa is different from its past.

The combined effect of the way in which Mr. Richardson spoke about history as being continuous or discontinuous with the present over the course of the year was to position the past, and in particular the apartheid era, as something which we should be trying to move away from but which still affects us. When discussing the negotiated settlement between Nelson Mandela and de Klerk, Mr. Richardson conceded Mandela's success in avoiding civil war, however expressed regret that "if you look at where we are, maybe it's because we could have addressed it better... it's difficult because I would also want things to be better." The compromise of the negotiated settlement, as Mr. Richardson expressed it, is that the tentacles of history continue to trip us up.

Causal Relationships Between Past and Present

Mr. Richardson's history teaching had a strong emphasis on cause and consequence as an historical thinking skill. A frequent activity that he set his students was to list the consequences of various historical events. For example, students were asked to identify the positive and negative consequences of the

Defiance Campaign for the ANC, or the short-term and long-term consequences of the Sharpeville Massacre. Although these activities never made reference to contemporary South Africa, they introduced a concept associated with historical thinking that what happens in one period in history has a causal relationship with future circumstances. As Mr. Richardson explained, “everything has consequences that lead to other things,” and what is more, “everything has long-term consequences.”

Although Mr. Richardson infrequently constructed connections between the past and the present, when the continuity of the apartheid era was referenced, Mr. Richardson often constructed strong causal relationships between what happened under apartheid (“antecedents”), and social injustices in contemporary South Africa (“outcomes”). What was striking about these causal connections was the detailed and methodical approach that Mr. Richardson employed, which encouraged students to deduce structural and inter-generational effects of various apartheid laws (“mechanisms”). For example, in the field note extract below I record a discussion between Mr. Richardson and his students regarding the connection between the Group Areas Act which was introduced in 1950 and Cape Town’s contemporary racial demographics:

T: The reason I asked you to read this source was because it’s incredible. It mentions Newlands. And what color are most people living in Newlands now?

SS: White

T: Yes, not all but most. So, it’s amazing that a White neighborhood is still like that after 1994, a long time ago. It’s still like that. The closer to the city the more White. Do we still have the Group Areas Act?

SS: YES

T: Not legally but it’s still like that. Hopefully in the future it will be that more people with money will move closer, but even that’s messed up. So why don’t people just move back?

S: They are used to it.

T: Do you think they like it? I don't understand what you are saying.

S: They don't like it.

T: But they're used to it, OK. Why else?

SS: Not enough money.

T: Why don't they just earn more money to move back?

S: Bantu education.

T: But there's no Bantu education now. So why don't people earn money?

S: White privilege.

T: That's part of it.

S: There are some people who get money for the land that they used to own and it splits between siblings.

S: If you have a lease then you should be able to kick out the White people who stole your home.

T: So I want to move away from people who have a claim to that land. That's a no-brainer. They should get the land back. But what about others? Why don't they earn more money?

S: They can't.

T: Yes, grandparents didn't have education so your parents couldn't have good education, so they couldn't get a good job, so they didn't have money.

S: Good schools are expensive.

T: Yes, and what else?

S: They're far away.

S: So you can't go.

T: Catchment areas. Right, yes. Stamford High School is unusual because it doesn't have a catchment area but if you want to go to Parkwood you have to live close. So it's too much money, too far. But what about the actual space? The actual place where you're living? A person doesn't have starting money to get to interviews. Or maybe to get to many interviews.

Students are very engaged.

T: The Group Areas Act wasn't a law that popped up and went away. Its effects have stayed. Not everyone has access. If you live far away you can have all the desire in the world to improve but there's so many barriers. So when we read a source about this family moving it's doubly sad because it's probably still affecting that society.

Rather than simply stating that apartheid is the reason for racial segregation in Cape Town today, Mr. Richardson uses a process of Socratic questioning to teach the students to construct various relationships or “mechanisms” between neighborhood, education, poverty, and social mobility in reference to specific apartheid laws across generations. His comments not only make claims about the lasting impacts of apartheid, but position individuals within the structural confines of their history. In doing so he implies to his students that success is influenced by circumstance, and circumstance is influenced by history; as a result of historical injustice some people will find it easier to be successful than others.

It is notable that during this discussion Mr. Richardson steered the conversation away from considerations of “White privilege”, racism, or discrimination as barriers to success. While not

dismissing these concerns – “that’s part of it” – he directed the class to consider structural reasons why Black and Coloured people struggle to access accommodation in historically-White neighborhoods. In particular, he encouraged students to develop an understanding that apartheid laws resulted in contemporary racialized inequality, rather than simply the contemporary attitudes of South Africans. Given the structural diagnosis of the problem that Mr. Richardson described, the problem could not be solved simply through non-racist attitudes. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, this was in contrast to Mr. Cilliers who constructed contemporary racist attitudes as being the cause of contemporary racialized inequality.

When Mr. Richardson does discuss White privilege, he again refers to it as being an aspect of structural inequality, rather than only personal or cultural attitudes. For example, in a rather vulnerable exchange, Mr. Richardson tells his students about his friend who realized that the house she was living in was forcibly removed from one of her student’s grandmothers:

T: Grade 9, I wanted to mention to you something interesting that I discovered over the weekend. A friend of mine is teaching at another school, their student was interviewing their grandmother who was removed by the Group Areas Act and the project was very nice with photos and looking at the photos the teacher realized that the house the grandmother was removed from was her house.

SS: YOH!!! YOH!!¹⁰

T: Mass guilt, can you imagine?

S: Did she remove the grandmother?

¹⁰ A common South African expression of surprise or shock.

T: So it wasn't the case that this grandmother was removed, and it passed to my friend. She was removed and then someone else bought it, and then someone else, and passed many times and now my friend's boyfriend owns the house. So she confronts that reality much more hectically than just from a textbook, because we're always learning, and she's learning in a very intense way. That's when you're facing your privilege. She has to process that and find out what it means for her. Obviously we all know that. Me, living in the Southern Suburbs. I know this, that I'm benefitting from my privilege, from others' suffering, and that's something that you have to deal with. That's something you have to respond to, not to feel guilty but to recognize that you had a massive head start and find some way to respond to it, and to live your life in a way that recognizes it, and tries to do something good with your lives, something that responds to that situation.

In this instance, Mr. Richardson talks about the emotion of guilt and the need to address contemporary privilege. He emphasized that the privilege accrued, even though it was not a result of any direct injustice that his friend had committed, or racist attitudes that his friend had displayed. Rather, as Mr. Richardson explains, his friend's boyfriend had simply bought the house years after her student's grandmother had been removed from it. Yet despite not doing anything wrong, Mr. Richardson describes how historical injustice means that he and his friend are benefitting from other peoples' suffering, for example through their ability to afford a house in the wealthy Southern Suburbs. In this instance Mr. Richardson also embraces and legitimizes the belief that history has affective as well as structural consequences for the present.

Furthermore, Mr. Richardson asserts that this historically unjust relationship between Black and White South Africans conveys certain contemporary moral responsibilities "to respond to it", "to live your life in a way that recognizes it", and "to do something good with your lives." By evoking a call to action, Mr. Richardson suggests that South Africa's contemporary injustice is at least in part a result of its historical injustice, and that the past has implications for how we should live our lives. This is true he

claims, even if an individual hasn't personally committed an injustice. South Africans, particularly those who have benefitted from historical injustice, are not free to ignore the past but rather must work with it. From my interviews with Mr. Richardson it was clear that his decision to work in a school that served low-income students was his attempt to "respond" to what he perceived as his moral responsibilities.

This sentiment was reiterated when discussing the nature of race, which the textbook explained as a social construct with no scientific legitimacy. Mr. Richardson agreed with this point, however he tried to convey how race could still be a politically valuable term in order to address historical injustice;

"In the textbook it says that racism is the classification of people according to the color of their skin. I want to change this a bit. It's possible to classify people by the color of their skin and it's important, in order to address the complex history of our past, as a tool to correct things. Racism is not about classification but about discrimination. We can classify without discriminating."

According to Mr. Richardson, the social construct of racial classification - which was created to discriminate in the past - must be carried into the present to rectify this discrimination. Once again, Mr. Richardson foregrounds his view that we cannot escape the influences of our past but are forced to work with them in order "to address the complex history" of South Africa.

In a variety of ways Mr. Richardson constructed a structural and causal relationship between past and present injustice. He furthermore encouraged his students to "respond" to legacies of the past, and "to be aware of what's going on". However, Mr. Richardson also avoided any in-depth discussion of what should be done to address this history. When discussing the house that was forcibly removed from the Coloured family, Mr. Richardson asked the class, "What do you think that my friend should do in that situation?" A student called out "Give it back". However, Mr. Richardson was dismissive of this suggestion; "Give the house back? What, just drop the keys and walk out?" He then promptly changed the topic. Given the implications of Mr. Richardson's history teaching, I was surprised that he did not choose to focus class discussions on ideas such as land reform and wealth redistribution.

Mr. Richardson also struggled when students offered their own historical interpretations of the present. During a discussion about Mandela and the negotiated settlement with the apartheid government, a Black student named Ntando angrily explained that South Africa's racialized inequality should be blamed on Mandela. Ntando argued that Mandela was working for the apartheid government all along, and that his twenty-six-year imprisonment was staged, in an attempt to gain the trust of Black South Africans. There is of course a large body of evidence which contradicts Ntando's claim that Mandela was an apartheid mole. However, given that this student was constructing a logical historical legacy – albeit drawing on historically inaccurate information – to explain genuine contemporary problems, Mr. Richardson found it difficult to correct him.

When I later spoke to Mr. Richardson about this interaction, I asked him whether race played a role in how he responded. His answer was fascinating, and suggests the interplay between racial identities and the construction of “legitimate” historical legacies:

“I think it's only fair to say that I would have reacted differently [if the races had been reversed]. And I think that my reticence to just come down quite hard on that as an outright falsehood is wrapped up in the fact that when he [Ntando] posits this theory there are a whole bunch of things that are behind that theory and those things are more emotional things, like anger and senses of betrayal and justified feelings that are... they're all kind of bubbling below what is objectively a wrong statement. And for me to kind of outright slam that and to knock it out of the park is to also outright slam and knock out of the park his justified feelings of frustration at the lack of change, feelings of betrayal around the negotiations process, and feelings of over-hyped hero-worship of Mandela when there were so many other people involved in the struggle and all of those things, which are legitimate concerns which I as a White man should not be really having a say in.

And I think that is what tempered my response and made me go “well... umm... yeah, I'm not

sure if that's true but dah dah dah" and kind of tip-toeing around it was because I wasn't actually tip-toeing around the facts of it, but I was tip-toeing around what I perceive to be things underlying this.

If he had been White and I had been standing in front of a class full of White kids I would have been like "that's ridiculous, he definitely was in prison" you know? And we can debate whether he was complicit in some level of give-and-take negotiating with the system in order to transfer people, the transfer of power, but we can't debate whether or not he was a freedom fighter who was on trial for treason and went to prison. I would have just smashed it, right? And that's because I would have treated that as a bogus statement by an uninformed person. But then because he [Ntando] is Black and as I said I believe it to be kind of like laced with a whole lot of other legitimate things that are presenting in this bogus argument, then I feel like it would be wrong for me to just pooh-pooh it."

Mr. Richardson acknowledges that the constructed legacy drew on factually incorrect information, but by dismissing the antecedent and mechanism of Ntando's legacy, he is afraid that he will also undermine the outcome. As Mr. Richardson said, he was not "tiptoeing around the facts of it", but rather "tiptoeing around what I perceive to be the things underlying this". Mr. Richardson's sensitivity on this point is a tacit acknowledgement of how much power legacy constructions have, and how much emotional and cultural weight underlies them.

How historical legacies are constructed by the students

The relationship between past and present

The students that participated in the interviews and focus groups that I held at Stamford High School were the most socially mobile of all the students in this study. They came from low and middle-income families, yet they had gained access to one of the top-performing schools in Cape Town. They thus had

a high likelihood of attending university. Furthermore, the students each had at least one parent who championed their education and made it possible for them to commute long distances to a school in the Southern Suburbs.

The comparison between the lives of their parents and the lives that they envisioned for themselves was regularly mentioned during our conversations. The students spoke about the ways in which they would be able to fulfil their academic and career potential, unlike their parents. In this regard the students evoked a strong discontinuity with the past. For example Amir described how his mother and father were removed from a good school under apartheid and sent to a “bad school”. Deborah said that “I look at my parents now... they are not where they wanted to be.” Similarly Aphiwe explained that “since Blacks couldn’t get quality education, a lot of our parents, they don’t have degrees and stuff in university. And maybe it’s us who will be the first to graduate.” In contrast, the students anticipated themselves as being successful, having opportunities, and looking forward to providing for their parents in the future; “I’m also going to want to take my parents out of where they’re living. I also want to put my parents in this nice place, and I can now spoil them, take them out for weekends, stuff like that.” In this regard, the existence of a quality school accessible to Black and Coloured students was seen as evidence of South Africa’s discontinuity with the apartheid past.

However when it came to understandings of racialized poverty and segregation, the students constructed the past as having a strong continuous and causal relationship with the present. Deborah for example, thought that contemporary South African society had such strong continuous links with apartheid that even if you had never studied history, you could “in this lifetime” deduce the history of apartheid from living in the society; “it’s still like happening now, and it’s all unravelling as we speak.” This is an extraordinary statement, which suggests that Deborah saw apartheid legacies as being woven into the lived experience of South Africans.

The continuous and causal relationship between the past and the present were constructed by the students in a number of different ways, drawing from intimate personal experiences, to broader global trends. In the first instance the students spoke about personal and social instances of racism, which they perceived to be a leftover from apartheid. Linda for example described how a White woman in a supermarket assumed she was poor and offered her food. Deborah described how eating plain bread for lunch was interpreted as evidence of poverty, even though she simply didn't have time to make proper sandwiches. Interestingly, Saara expressed outrage that even 'born-frees' were racist; "You still have the apartheid brains. And it's young people. They didn't even live in apartheid but they have that mind-set." The past was seeping into the present and contaminating the minds of those who should have escaped.

However these racist attitudes were most shocking to the students when expressed by their parents. Linda, for example, told her mother that she might start dating a White friend. Her mother responded that "I'm going to have to try and be open-minded for you, and try to learn to accept". However when Linda voiced attraction to another White man, her mother replied "what's up with you and White guys?" For Linda this came as a shock since she hadn't noticed the race of the man. Aphiwe similarly described his surprise when his mother stated that the quality of a formerly-White school had deteriorated since the student population had become mostly Black. Amir rejected his mother's advice that he should not mix with people who were of a different race. Parents' attitudes were explained by the students as an example of the damage that apartheid caused to their parents, and a mindset which they themselves were trying to resist and unlearn. According to the students, apartheid legacies included racism.

But how to unlearn racism? History education "is a good thing but then it's also a bad thing" when trying to resist "apartheid brains". Aphiwe for example thought that learning about apartheid helped people to "have a broader perspective of everything, and they can see what happened actually, why we got to this point, why we're so behind." He also felt that "it inspires me that I can also make a difference... if there's something wrong, I can stand up." Deborah however warned that,

“Going over your race and apartheid and stuff like that, you’re clinging onto what happened in the past, and you’re repeating. And obviously if you’re constantly saying that Black people were so oppressed, and stuff like that, you’re constantly planting it into young, Black children’s minds... and then they grow up to feel like we were oppressed.”

The tension that history education posed perhaps encapsulated the tension at the heart of all my conversations with the Stamford High students; the need to use the past to interpret the present, while simultaneously needing to escape the past so as to reimagine the present.

The second way that the students spoke about the causal and continuous relationship between the past and the present was in regard to the financial circumstances of their families, and how that affected their own opportunities. The students, without exception, constructed their low-income status as a legacy of apartheid. Saara for example spoke about how “my family would probably be rich, my daddy’s side, because they had a business and they lost their business.” She also described how she would not be living in Hanover Park, a low-income area, but rather “would be living in District Six because my mommy’s daddy comes from there, comes from District Six. She literally lost her home in District Six. I would be living in Cape Town,” and “I would be at a much better school probably.”

Aphiwe similarly spoke about how thinking about apartheid “makes me sad because if maybe my mother had received that quality education, and also advanced to university, maybe I would have had a better life.” He saw his life circumstances impacted in the same way as Saara; “From my father’s side, my grandfather also lost land also. He owned a farm.”

In this exchange between Aphiwe and Saara, they link a specific apartheid law that they had discussed in history class to their own lives;

Aphiwe: It also affected our grandparents and parents. I think it also affects us because of the way we, what can I say? Like we have been living because like, since apartheid there was the Group Areas Act where they divided us.

Saara: And that same amount of people...

Aphiwe: Are still living in those same areas.

Saara: In Hanover Park? Coloured, everywhere Coloureds. Mannenberg? Coloureds. Mitchell's Plain? Coloureds. Gugulethu? Black people. Khayelitsha? Black people.

Aphiwe: Rondebosch? White people. It's still the same.

Aphiwe expands upon this point when he says, “It’s still the same as apartheid because there’s a mostly Black area where you won’t see any White people, and then there’s Coloured areas where you won’t see a lot of White people.” He goes on to say; “It’s because of the acts of apartheid and it’s already tough on us, it’s already tough to go and stay in those areas, because it’s expensive. And plus the education that our grandparents received.”

It was clear from the interviews that the students at Stamford High had a well-established belief in the impact of apartheid laws on their families. However what further set these students apart from their peers in other schools was the sophisticated way in which they were able to explain the “mechanism” of this legacy construction; the structural reasons why wealth amassed under apartheid was transferred inter-generationally among White families. Deborah for example, spoke about the disproportionate value of having expendable income to invest, which allowed money to make money. White families “invest and they save and they invest and save” whereas for Black people “the little money that we are saving... it’s going to take years to get to the money that the White people can save in a month’s time”.

Deborah also spoke about how success as a Black or Coloured person came with obligations to assist extended family who might be struggling. Unlike a White person who could afford to keep their own wealth, Black and Coloured people often existed within networks of struggling relatives who slow your progress to the top. “If one grandchild makes it,” explains Deborah, “they have to help everything and every one of them, and then they have no money for themselves to start saving... So that’s a bit of a burden unto Black people, like, having, being breadwinners for everyone and not just your house, but like everyone.” What’s more, this obligation to extended family members meant that your own children would likely also be poor; “You can’t start a new generation, like this better generation if you didn’t help the others.”

Lastly, Deborah spoke about the lack of financial safety nets for Black students. If a Black or Coloured student dropped out of university for example, in part because “they were in situations where they couldn’t help but fail”, they would quite likely become unemployed and fall into poverty;

“There’s no foundation to go back on and start rebuilding. Then you have to start with your foundation again, and then struggle, struggle, struggle. And in time, you won’t make it because obviously the price of stuff will rise, your money will decrease.”

Deborah thought that a White student, by contrast, might be given money by their parents to start their own business, or be hired by the family company because “they have the money just in the background, that we don’t know about.” Linda agreed with Jolene and offered the example of her grandfather;

“He’s supposed to be retired by now, but because of some of his children not finishing school and not being able to get jobs and all stuff... he has to go back to work. He’s working hard. He’s supposed to be at home resting.”

Two important insights can be concluded from these discussions on wealth. The first is that the students could easily construct historical explanations for why generations of Black and Coloured people who

never lived under apartheid might still be poor. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this is in stark difference to the students at Southgate High School who did not believe that a parent's income could influence the future opportunities of a child. The second insight is that the students at Stamford High School conclude that in regard to wealth distribution very little has changed since apartheid. Linda sums this up when she says:

"I feel like when apartheid ended, the only thing that changed was the government role. Everything else stayed the same; the wealth of the Black people, like the non-Whites, everyone who was oppressed – it stays the same. It didn't change anything."

Although some of the students recounted instances of racism, most felt that it was the structural, "practical" effects of apartheid that were the most significant legacy, rather than the inter-personal discrimination. Michelle for example explained that "I guess it still affects us in a more practical way instead of how we feel about it, because we weren't there." In the instances where there was discrimination, Deborah explained that "it's our choice" to associate only with people who speak the same language. In this regard, she explained, apartheid has socialized South Africans into "being more comfortable with their own race". The decision to remain comfortable, however, rested with the individual.

The third and last way in which the students spoke about the continuous and causal relationship between the past and present was in regard to the state of South Africa as a nation. There was a strong feeling that South Africa would be wealthier if it was not for apartheid and colonialism. For example, Linda explained that we "wouldn't have as much poverty because of the amount of minerals that were stolen from us", and Saara felt that "if it weren't for slavery that came to Africa and things like that we would have been richer than anyone else in the world." For Aphiwe, the poverty could be attributed to a loss of land;

“Many Black people and also other Indians and Coloured, they owned property before apartheid, actually a long time, even before the 1900s. And their property was taken by the colonizers, and so they still haven’t received land because they used to own huge chunks of land. And people are poor on the streets, and they know they own land, but they haven’t received their land, and still struggling on the street. Maybe if they got their land, they would improve their lives.”

Inequality and its effects were also attributed to apartheid. Deborah spoke about how if apartheid hadn’t happened then wealth “would be more balanced, like amounts of salaries that we get.” Aphiwe attributed the need for social grants to apartheid laws that prevented South Africans from earning a livelihood; “it’s paying out money because a lot of Black people, and Coloured people also, they didn’t receive education, and so most of them aren’t working and they’re elderly. So they pay them grants, so they can all live.” He also thought that the racialized inequality in the school system would not exist if it were not for apartheid, so that “it would be normal for a school to have the same percentages of people. Let’s say there is 33% Black people, 33% Coloured people, 33% White people, and we couldn’t actually call Parkwood a White school.”

It is also important to note however, that on a few occasions students felt that discontinuity with the past was negative, and continuity with the past was positive. Saara, for example, spoke about how “the bad thing about moving from apartheid is the corruption, ma’am” which she believed increased under democracy;

“I’m not saying that apartheid was good but corruption wasn’t that rife. It wasn’t so much. Like, there used to be corruption but you wouldn’t hear of it. You would hear of it but it would be a once in the blue moon thing and everyone used to do their job, there was passion for their job. But now I’m not saying people aren’t passionate but people are just there because they have to be there for their job. That’s the kind of vibe that I feel from people because they’re not there

for the passion and they just do their job because they have to do their job, because they have to earn money.”

Michelle similarly felt that the hardships that Black people felt under apartheid were good for building character. “White people don’t have the sense of hard work in them,” she explained, whereas;

“Black people are hard-working. They look at all the mistakes of the past, and they’re able to rectify it, so that you can shape your present so that your future can be a different way... So yes of course Black people don’t have jobs, Black people don’t have money, but think about other stuff also that you can learn from what Black people are missing. And White people don’t have that. They just think, ah, everything comes to me, no mistakes, I can just do this and that. But Black people, they’re able to look at what my mother made a mistake, and fix it, even if they don’t have the money, but you learn to be hard-working, you learn leadership qualities from that.”

This perspective is interesting, and perhaps reflects Michelle’s Christian faith in which she understands historical events as “happening for a reason”.

Understanding contemporary issues: Gang violence

Adopting an approach similar to Foster et al (Foster et al. 2008) and Duquette (Duquette, 2015) I sought to understand how the students in the focus groups explained contemporary issues facing their society, and whether or not history was used as one of the explanatory factors. The issues that were selected to speak about arose naturally from my conversations with the students, in an attempt to ensure their relevance to the students’ lives. Crime and gang violence was an issue that all the students at Stamford High had experience of, and I have thus chosen this contemporary issue as a case study, to explore the ways in which students interpret their society.

All the students that participated in the focus group came from communities that suffered from gang violence. A number of different explanations were given for the prevalence and increase of gang violence. Linda, for example, suggested that the increase in violent crime needed to be explained in the context of a worldwide trend; “It’s worse on a global scale, not just worse in South Africa.” However she also thought that gangs existed because they had a social value and provided a sense of community; “In those gangs you have that idea of brotherhood, they really help each other, but they help each other through having to do criminal acts.”

Michelle at first explained gangs through a psychological factor, namely the idea that “we are a more like a power-hungry generation I think, so everyone wants to be powerful or have money or live the life and crime is a way to get to that.” However she also employed historical explanations when she said that “Some people have the mindset that apartheid might come back and like, they want to be ready for the future to protect themselves, just in case something like that would happen,” and that this explains why there are no White gangs; “Because apartheid... really affected the Black and the Coloured people. Like, from my point of view I really don’t think it actually it affected the White people, so I don’t think that maybe they have any reason to, you know, fight for something they already have.”

Saara similarly used both a psychological and historical explanation. She felt that gang violence was as a result of the personal life traumas of the gangsters; “It’s like, ma’am, their personal life when they were younger, they probably had like, whatever happened in their life they didn’t chose to become a gangster and then you have to stay in this particular gang ma’am, and then you have to prove yourself by shooting other Coloureds.”

However she also thought that the increase in gang violence is because laws now are not as harsh as they were under apartheid; “Because of White supremacy they would just beat you up, and people were afraid of that. If they caught you in a crime they would like torture you or things like that. But now if you get caught you just get put in the back of a prison van, or put in prison.” In this regard Amir agreed with her

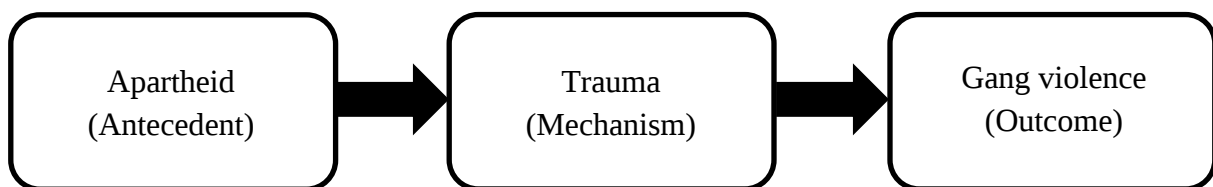
since “in apartheid, ma’am, people were controlled...but now people have so much freedom they think they can do anything they want.”

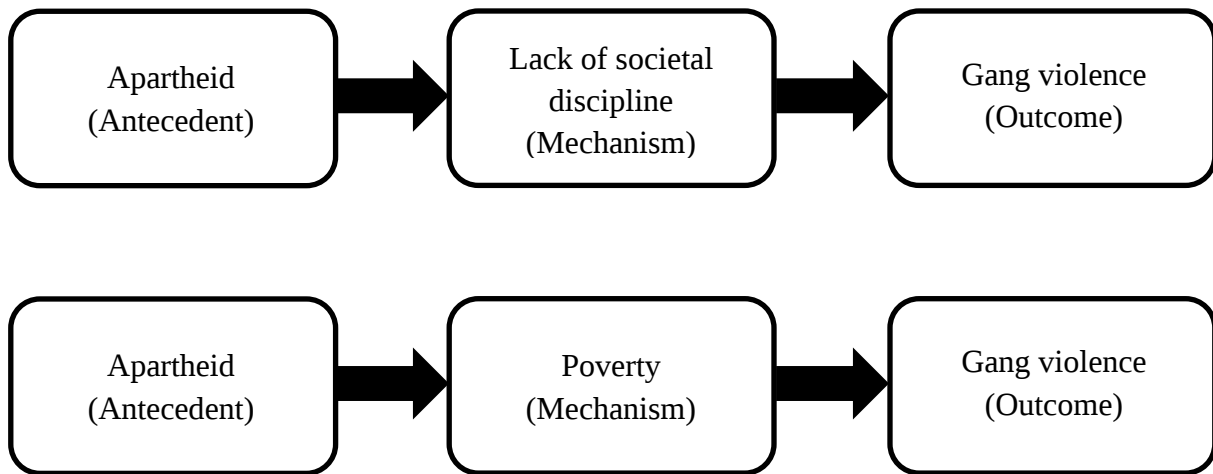
For Aphiwe, the explanation for gang violence only drew on historical factors. He thought that gang violence could be explained by the poverty caused by apartheid; “So many gangs formed because since, after apartheid lots of people of color, since caused by the things of apartheid, ma’am, since they are now stuck in poverty others took to crime.” Aphiwe builds on this hypothesis to explain why Coloured people are more likely to be involved in gang violence than Black people;

“The reason why there are so many gangs, ma’am, for Coloureds, ma’am, is because after apartheid the Black people they were put like on affirmative action and Coloureds were also affected by apartheid, but weren’t put on affirmative action than Blacks. Like Blacks are now, there are more opportunities for Black people than there are opportunities for Coloured people.”

Approximately half of the explanations given for gang violence by the Stamford High students constructed gang violence as a legacy of apartheid. However these historical explanations - the “mechanisms” - were diverse. While never explicitly disagreeing with each other, students attributed gang violence to a) a fear of the return of apartheid, b) the ending of apartheid, and c) the economic effects of apartheid. It is interesting to note that both of the Coloured students felt that the end of apartheid marked an end of discipline in their communities, whereas none of the Black students felt that this was the case.

Diagram 2: Different ways that Stamford High students constructed historical legacies





Theoretically these diverse explanations of gang violence are interesting when understanding the construction of historical legacies. These students use the past to interpret the social issues faced in contemporary South Africa. However they are constructing different mechanisms to connect the same antecedents and outcomes. What is more, it appears that these different legacy constructions might fall along racial lines.

Conclusion

The data collected from these classroom observations and focus groups provide a rich insight into the various ways in which history was used to interpret contemporary South Africa. While the teacher did not make many references to the present, when he did they always had either a negative/continuous or a positive/discontinuous relationship to the present. Over the course of the year he engaged in a few deeply analytical discussions with his students regarding apartheid legacies. The students responded enthusiastically to these discussions, and for the most part their personal attitudes in the focus groups reflected those constructed in the classroom; namely, that contemporary legacies of apartheid are negative.

Yet it would be misleading to think that the students' legacy constructions were a direct mirroring of the teachers. Rather they were focused and refracted through the lenses of their own beliefs and life experiences. Michelle, for example, referenced her Christian faith when speaking about apartheid, and the idea that "everything happens for a reason". In conversations about legacies of apartheid she chose to emphasize the moral gains of the Black community which resulted from their suffering, and when speaking about the issue of gang violence she described crime as being a moral failing of a power-hungry generation.

Aphiwe, by contrast was eager to explain his life circumstances as a result of the structural influence of apartheid. Being raised by a single mother, and having little contact with his father, he constructed historical explanations for paternal absences; "I think that effect started with those closed compounds, when Black fathers had to move to town to find work, leaving the mothers and children behind. That's why there are so many single Black mothers." Even Mr. Richardson's anxieties about White privilege and his role in teaching apartheid history to Black and Coloured youth might help explain his paralysis when the need arose to correct Ntando's factual inaccuracies.

The racialized differences between the students also proved interesting. While both Black and Coloured students drew upon historical reasons for violence – as Mr. Richardson had taught them to – they drew upon different historical reasons. Coloured students attributed gang violence to a lack of apartheid authority, whereas Black students attributed gang violence to apartheid trauma. The subtle racialized differences in the way historical legacies were constructed, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Chapter 6

Case Study 2: Historical Legacies at Southgate High School

Introduction

It is the last day of teaching before the end of year exams and the long summer holidays after that. There's a buzz of nervous excitement among the students: the windows are open, the weather is warm, and in a few short weeks they'll be free to enjoy the sunshine. Mr. Cilliers however is stressed. He is rushing through the last of the term's work, projecting a timeline of apartheid events at the front of his large classroom and asking the class to write it all down. His usual engaging manner has been abandoned today for the sake of brevity and the need to just "get it done".

The students however, have other ideas.

"This is a photograph of D.F. Malan," explains Mr. Cilliers, "the architect of apartheid. That means that he decided a lot of the rules of apartheid, and how best to separate people." Immediately a hand goes up. "Yes, Nisha."

"Sir, why is there still a school called D.F. Malan High School in Cape Town if he was the architect of apartheid?"

I look up from my note-taking, vaguely stunned. I have been observing this class for ten months, and for the first time – on the last day – a student is using the past to challenge the present. It feels radical.

Mr. Cilliers explains that school names are decided by the school governing body, and that the school governing body is elected by etc. etc.... I'm confused. Has he misunderstood the question? Or is Mr. Cilliers intentionally drowning us in technicalities to deflect from the obvious concern: the legacies of South Africa's difficult past.

The true meaning of the question isn't lost on the students however, and the class is alert. Not deterred, Nisha continues; "I don't think it should be allowed. I think it would be disgraceful" – her voice high with intensity – "for a Coloured person like to me attend a school with a name like that". She spits the last words out as though they disgust her. A cry of both support and indignation runs through the classroom and a dozen hands shoot up.

Mr. Cilliers has no choice but to submit to the pull of the class. The apartheid notes are reluctantly abandoned as he takes comments, all the while being careful never to voice his own opinion. "It's just a name, it doesn't matter," shouts Alex, and half the class groans. "I think that name makes some people feel unwelcome," argues Jo, and the other half shake their heads. The class is divided, but certainly no Black or Coloured students think this doesn't matter. The racial tensions are starting to show. There is anger and apprehension.

The teacher deflects to me; "What does Mrs. Robinson think?" Until now I've been careful not to show my true colors, but this is the last day of fieldwork I think, so it can't hurt. And anyway, I am also angry.

"I'm shocked," I begin, my voice trembling, "to see that some of you think this doesn't matter. Would you say the same if a school was named after Hitler? Would you think a Jewish person could attend that school?" But by this stage my voice is drowned out by a crescendo of feeling and opinion. This class – usually so impeccably behaved and united – is out of control.

All of a sudden the bell rings, and the focus is once again on Mr. Cilliers. Slightly stunned, he finds his words; "Good afternoon Grade 9, and good luck with the exams."

Chapter Structure

This chapter addresses the question of Grade 9 students at Southgate High School learn to construct historical legacies. It furthermore seeks to explore how the students in Alfie Cilliers' class construct

explanations for contemporary South African social issues – such as the racialized symbolism of names described in the vignette above – and whether the history they learn is a feature in those explanations.

In a structure similar to Chapter 5, this chapter is divided into two parts. In Part One I offer thick ethnographic descriptions of Southgate High School, as well as ethnographic biographies of two students and their history teacher. In Part Two I concentrate on the way in which historical legacies were constructed by the teacher and his students in the context of their history classroom.

Part One

School portrait

“How long must we keep apologizing for?” vents the geography teacher aloud in the staffroom; “It must be the same in Ireland where people hark on about the past”.

She is referring to a series of workshops that Southgate High has recently organized in response to allegations of the schools’ racist culture. These workshops – facilitated by experts at great expense – encourage staff and students to reflect on what it means to be part of this school. Yet the geography teacher has unwittingly touched upon what no one in the room has yet dared to articulate; that this response is still a part of apartheid’s legacy, and that “we” might still have something to apologize for.

Indeed the workshops have divided the staff between those who feel the approach represents progress, those who experience it as a form of surrender, and those who dismiss it as a plaster over a much deeper wound. The issue at stake is whether institutions like this – elite, exclusive, largely White – should be allowed to exist in the new South Africa, and in what form. How inclusive can an intentionally exclusive school be?

“At least our classrooms are small,” jokes the receptionist referring to the historic listed school buildings; “the government can’t force us to take any more children.”

Southgate High School is regarded as the most prestigious school within this study’s sample. Despite maintaining its government school status, the fees are upwards of R40,000 per year, and there is a boarding option. Under apartheid Southgate High was a Whites-only school. Its student and staff population have remained overwhelmingly White due to the demographics of the catchment area. The school boasts an impressive 100% matriculation pass rate, and the students and staff face a high degree of pressure to perform. Although never verified by staff at the school, the students told me that Southgate High has been known to ask students to leave if they are unlikely to pass their matriculation exam. Reputation is extremely important; Southgate High competes with other elite schools in the neighborhood for the application of students from high-income families.

Mr. Cilliers, the head of History at Southgate High, was the first teacher to respond to my request. Although in initial emails he posed tough questions about how the research would benefit his students, once we met he was extremely enthusiastic – even excited. One thing he doesn’t like, he explains, are researchers who come in for a day and then never stay in touch. A project that lasts the year is therefore likely to lend itself to better feedback from the researcher. Almost immediately Mr. Cilliers can introduce me to the principal – Mr. Brookes – who without question signs the consent form. It is clear to me that there is a high degree of trust and autonomy among the staff to organize activities that would be beneficial to the students’ development. Indeed, the list of extra-curricular trips and activities that students can participate in is extensive, and the curriculum is often adapted to the teachers’ interests.

The digital infrastructure of the school in part makes this autonomy possible. Every student is registered on an online system and all teachers are provided with tablets where they can access student details including timetables, attendance records, medical concerns, exam records, parents’ jobs, and contact

numbers. All this information is also shared with parents who are notified for example, if their child arrives to class late, or does not hand in a piece of homework. There is seamless and constant communication about and around the student.

Southgate High's physical infrastructure is similarly impressive. The buildings and grounds are immaculate. Upon entering the school through large electric gates, one is greeted by male security guards – usually Congolese – dressed in smart black and red uniforms. The guards verify identification before directing the visitor towards the reception area. The front of the school is large and white, with grand colonial-style columns and wooden shutters over large sash windows. The wood-paneled reception area has leather couches in the waiting area to the right, and two receptionists behind a glass panel to the left. These receptionists control access to the main body of the school – a large grassy courtyard, surrounded by two floors of classrooms on the left and the right, and a library and assembly hall on the opposite side. Within this courtyard are mature trees with swinging chairs where students can read or take their lunch.

Beyond this historic building Southgate High has expanded to include dance studios, arts rooms, music rooms, and extensive sports grounds, including an Olympic-size swimming pool where the water polo team trains. The walls throughout the school are pristine white, and are regularly cleaned by a large team of cleaning staff dressed in smart blue uniforms. A specific member of the cleaning staff team is designated to the spacious staff room. Twice a day she prepares the tea, coffee and biscuits for all the staff, and tidies away their dishes.

The teaching and office staff at Southgate High are almost entirely White, while the cleaning and security staff are entirely Black. The dynamics of this racial division are never spoken about, yet upon entering the school the contrast is displayed starkly; a headshot of each staff member is pinned up, alongside their name and their position in the school. However these headshots are divided into two groups; the “professional” and the “auxiliary” staff members. The former are almost all White, and dressed

professionally, while the latter are all Black and dressed in blue workers' uniform. The spatial division of this display seemed unnecessary to me – why not intersperse the photos? – yet it serves to normalize the racial hierarchy that permeated the school; one in which Black people served White people.

Indeed, at the time of this research Southgate High was facing media scrutiny over allegations of the racist staff dismissal of a Black teacher. Ideas of racism, inclusion, and belonging were therefore becoming widely discussed within the school, positioned under the umbrella term of “transformation”. While the school denied the allegations, a concerted effort was made to protect the reputation of Southgate High, for fear that more liberal parents would withhold applications.

In response, Mr. Brookes and the Senior Management Team (SMT) decided to embark upon a series of ‘dialogue days’ all focusing on the idea of what it means to ‘belong’ to Southgate High. These workshops were designed and facilitated by an external consultancy group, who trained staff volunteers to promote the idea of ‘transformation’ within the school. For one full day a term, all students and staff participated in these workshops. Although I would have loved to attend, Mr. Brookes preferred that these workshops were kept ‘internal’. I interpreted this as an insecurity about what might be said, and a concern about more negative media headlines should they have leaked.

The allegations and the workshops proved divisive among the staff at Southgate High. Among the most critical was Ms. Hayes who spoke at length to me in the staffroom about her frustrations. “In general it went well,” she explained, referring to the dialogue day, “but talking about my feelings is simply not my thing.” She interpreted the attack on Southgate High as an attack on excellence; “Why should we have to change when we are an example of success?” Rather she saw the poverty and dysfunction of “Black” schools as a result of government ineptitude. When the bell rang, Ms. Hayes stood up to go to her geography class; “We’re doing colonialism today,” she grumbled, “the bit where we tell them that Africa’s problems are all our fault.”

Similar criticisms were expressed by other older teachers who appeared confused by the dialogue days. “I know these discussions are supposed to make me feel guilty,” mused one Mathematics teacher, “But I just don’t feel that way so I’m not sure what I should say.” It was surprising that workshops which had been so carefully choreographed to avoid talking about the past were still being thought about within an apartheid framework.

On the other side of the spectrum were the two French teachers, both French nationals, who, when out of earshot from their colleagues, complained at length about the racist attitudes in the school. While positive about the direction in which the school was moving, they felt the SMT was using the process insincerely so that if a racist incident did occur they could point and say “we tried!” “The dialogue is important,” they conceded, “but this ‘three minutes to talk to your neighbor’ approach is not dialogue.” Indeed the younger of the two teachers was feeling so disillusioned with the elitist and exclusive culture of the school that she confided in me her plans to resign at the end of the year.

And what about the students? It was striking that almost every teacher in the lesson after the first Dialogue Day spent the class probing what the students thought, to such an extent that by the time it came to history class the Grade 9s were bored of discussing it. In general though the students reported back to their teachers that they had a very positive experience, and many articulated their surprise that other classmates had similarly felt excluded or unworthy of the competitive academic culture. While some students expressed feelings of guilt in relation to race, for the most part students viewed the theme of “belonging” as being in relation to sexual orientation or mental health. These were the grounds for exclusion at Southgate High as they experienced it, and according to the students these should have been given more of a focus.

Attempts to involve the parents in this ‘transformation’ process were less successful. The school organized an evening for parents to engage directly with the Dialogue Day facilitators. A friend who had a daughter at Southgate High shared the invitation with me, and since no one had told me I could not

attend, I decided to join. Yet when I walked to the school from my home after dinner, I found the building largely empty. The auditorium had been set up with 400 chairs, but in the end only 15 parents attended. They rearranged the chairs into a small circle and discussed the importance of transformation. Mr. Brookes even joined for a part, positioning himself outside the circle, but the outcome of the meeting was unclear.

While the school grappled with South Africa's past, the history of the Holocaust was widely discussed. Indeed, the Holocaust was the topic of three of Grade 9s classes during my fieldwork; History, French, and English Literature. Some students even used the Holocaust as the basis of their Art projects, creating memorials for those who died. One day, upon entering the school I was greeted by a string of beautiful paper butterflies, hung between the courtyard pillars. On the back of each butterfly were lists of the names of children who had been murdered in Auschwitz. One of the most anticipated school fieldtrips was to Cape Town's Holocaust museum, where the guide confided to me that the students from Southgate High had a reputation for crying more than any other school.

The interest in the Holocaust, perhaps at the expense of apartheid, was one of the many ways in which Southgate High was orientated towards Europe rather than Africa. There was a clear preference for the study of European languages over African languages. School trips abroad were never taken in African countries. Of the three White students that I interviewed, two strongly identified with their European ancestry, all had family in Europe, and all had clear aspirations to leave Africa as soon as they were able.

The one exception to this European focus was the Jabulani (meaning 'rejoice' in Zulu) Society, which on the notice board advertised itself as a "cultural society", and whose organizing members were all Black. Although the society description made no mention of race it had strong African overtones, and the White students in the Grade 9 class wondered aloud whether they were welcome to join. Soon after my fieldwork began the noticeboard advertised a Jabulani Society event the following week for which tickets were being sold. I attended, uncertain what to expect, but was blown away by the performance.

Approximately 150 students – only one of whom was White – from almost ten different schools (including Southgate High), sang, danced, or rapped for two hours. Many of the performances were in African languages or were reflective of African-American culture. The audience was packed, including many Black parents and families who were on their feet dancing.

The juxtaposition between the daily school culture and this massive celebration of what appeared to be ‘Black culture’ was confusing. Although I did not have the opportunity to interview members of the Jabulani Society, I wondered whether their intention was to create a space for Black culture, and if so, why they chose not to advertise that intention.

History teacher: Alfie Cilliers

The bright African prints of Mr. Cilliers’ rolled up shirts are a welcome splash of color in a school of pristine white walls and colonnades. “Actually not African,” he reminds me - ever the history teacher - as we wait for the class to arrive; “the shwe shwe fabric was originally imported from Indonesia during the slave trade.” He had once shouted this at a Black activist in a supermarket after being accused of cultural appropriation, followed by the ace up his sleeve; “I was fighting apartheid before you were even born!”

The students start to stream into class, chatting and giggling. “Come this way, make my day!” booms Mr. Cilliers, waving them through the door and lavishing compliments on each one who passes; “Great performance this morning Rachel”, “I like your haircut George – looking sharp!”, “I enjoyed reading your essay Lena.”

As her classmates take their seats, a student carrying a rolled-up poster walks quickly to the front of the class, excited to present Mr. Cilliers with a gift. “I brought it for you from Hong Kong,” she gushes, “It’s a Chinese propaganda poster.”

“Wowee” exclaims Mr. Cilliers as he carefully unrolls the fragile paper, “What an incredible piece of history. Thank you Lucy! What were you doing in Hong Kong?”

“I went with my church group for a missionary exchange,” Lucy explains, almost hovering with excitement, “and I found this poster in a market we went to and it reminded me of that time you taught us about propaganda!”

“Well remembered,” laughs Mr. Cilliers warmly; “It will look fantastic on my wall.”

Alfie Cilliers oozed a contagious enthusiasm for history. Rather than rely on the textbook, he used worksheets, documentaries, and pieces of music as learning tools which he had developed or curated over thirty years of teaching. Strong emphasis was placed on historical thinking skills as well as exam preparation; “Let’s get exam ready!” he would often shout. A history teacher his entire life, he was now coming close to retirement. “What will you do when you retire?” I asked. “I’ll have to find a way to teach someone something,” he joked.

His love for his students was also remarkable. Often he would describe to me with the greatest sincerity how fantastic a school performance was, or a students’ poem, or how well a student had progressed in their writing. On the last day of term I watched as he handmade cards for each of his graduating students, telling them how special they were and how much he had enjoyed teaching them. His bright and spacious classroom was decorated with posters of Mandela, Gandhi, and John Lennon, as well as anti-apartheid slogan t-shirts he printed in the 1980s. The word “RESPECTANCE” was displayed at the front of the classroom; his form class was asked to choose their most important value, and they couldn’t decide between ‘respect’ and ‘acceptance’.

The students reciprocated in their affection for Mr. Cilliers, crediting him with their love for history although at times feeling overwhelmed by his enthusiasm. Macie, for example, commented that “he

throws in his own opinions, which is nice because we have facts but maybe it's better to understand from someone else's point of view as well," while Alice spoke about how "he made us get more interested in it... because he makes it more exciting to learn." Mr. Cilliers was compared favorably to Ms. Duffey who had a reputation for just teaching history from the textbook.

Mr. Cilliers' history with Southgate High was deep and personal. The late Mrs. Cilliers had been the boarding matron here, and both of their children had passed through its doors. His son-in-law and some of his closest friends worked at the school. It was a community that had embraced him after his wife passed away, just months before my fieldwork began. He loved spending time in the staffroom, joking and flirting with the other teachers and proudly introducing me as a researcher from Oxford. Frequently Mr. Cilliers would invite his colleagues to listen to live music, and occasionally I would join.

This isn't to say that Mr. Cilliers was not critical of the school. He described his relationship with the much younger Mr. Brookes as an uneasy truce. Mr. Brookes granted Mr. Cilliers a certain exceptionalism on account of his experience and popularity, in the understanding that Mr. Cilliers would soon retire. While in front of the students Mr. Cilliers praised the Dialogue Days, in private he felt that they were a "weak tea" approach to a much larger problem and chose not to engage.

Involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle was an important part of Mr. Cilliers' identity, and indeed of his approach to history teaching. He credited the development of his political opinions to his own education. Despite growing up in a "racist" household, his English teacher was an anti-apartheid progressive. Through these lessons Mr. Cilliers understood what was happening outside of Cape Town's Whites-only neighborhoods. When he later studied history at the University of Cape Town, he joined the anti-apartheid activist movements together with his wife, and eventually they joined the United Democratic Front (UDF). As a result of this engagement Mr. Cilliers had good connections among White activists, and often invited them to speak to his classes. Notable figures such as Denis Goldberg and Mary Burton were annual guests.

Mr. Cilliers spoke at length to his students about his anti-apartheid involvement. Yet he was careful to emphasize that he was not a hero, rather just someone doing what was right and necessary. He described, for example, how he and his wife would take turns going to UDF meetings so that there would be someone to stay with the children in case they were arrested. He described walking through White neighborhoods and seeing all the candles lit in the windows as a form of silent anti-apartheid protest, or how his family forewent Christmas presents one year to donate money to the families of political prisoners. These examples he used to demonstrate to students how easy it is to stand up to injustice.

However the limitations of this approach were humorously laid bare during a class where exchange students from John May High joined in. Mr. Cilliers asked the class to think of ways in which they could have resisted apartheid. Southgate High students suggested printing pamphlets, organizing prayer meetings, or writing letters. The John May High students in contrast gave examples of how their parents had resisted apartheid through rioting and targeting police stations with petrol bombs. The use of violence as a form of resistance made the Southgate High class uneasy, despite being an important and effective way in which the end of apartheid was realized.

Indeed, the morally difficult or ambiguous aspects of history were often left out of Mr. Cilliers teaching, in favor of a straightforward human rights approach. “There’s no point telling me about apartheid laws,” he would drum into his class, “without telling me how they ruin human rights”. Students’ attempts to discuss moral nuances were often shut down or ignored, particularly when in reference to South African history. Mr. Cilliers spent the whole of the first term teaching about children’s rights, meaning that there was insufficient time to teach about apartheid history. The entire last term of the curriculum, which should have addressed the resistance to apartheid, was left out. When I asked the focus group why they thought they had not learned about the resistance to apartheid, one student replied, “was there a resistance to apartheid?”

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of Mr. Cilliers teaching was the level of emotion that was evoked. The day after the Dialogue Day Mr. Cilliers devoted an entire class to reflection on how his students felt about the discussions. A particular focus was on how bad it feels to be discriminated against, and this bad feeling became the touchstone for understanding discrimination and human rights abuses throughout both the Holocaust and apartheid curriculum. When the students were tasked with interviewing someone who was alive during apartheid, for example, Mr. Cilliers encouraged his class to ask how their interviewees felt. When the students reported back on their interviews Mr. Cilliers asked them how they themselves felt when hearing this testimony. A premium was placed on evoking strong emotion; “You will interview someone about apartheid and that interview will stick with you, not just the facts but the emotions and the feelings.”

During a lesson on the rise of Hitler, students were asked “How would those who belonged to the ‘Master Race’ feel? And how about the people who did not belong to the ‘Master Race’?”. During a lesson on Kristallnacht, students were asked how it would feel to be a Jew watching the synagogues burn. Sometimes Mr. Cilliers would go around the class, giving every student the opportunity to say how they felt, while at other times students were encouraged to write their feelings down in their notebooks.

Although there were critical questions that I wished to ask Mr. Cilliers regarding his teaching, I felt that critical feedback would not be welcome. Particularly as he neared the end of his career, Mr. Cilliers was more comfortable in a position of ‘expert’. Indeed he frequently positioned me as his student, teaching me not only about South African history but also how to be a good history teacher.

Personal histories of students

Macie

“This is the careers room,” the librarian tells me as she unlocks the tiny office on the mezzanine floor of the library. “Well, we call it the careers room,” she confides with a smile, “but really the school

counsellor uses it. We just don't want anyone to feel embarrassed if they need to come in here for a chat."

The walls are lined with shelves of university prospectuses and posters displaying the merits of various professions. I arrange two chairs at a comfortable distance from each other and after a moment's consideration I rearrange them.

3:05pm Macie knocks on the door and I welcome her in. We're both a bit nervous having only recently met, but I try to position myself as not-a-teacher; rather a friendly older adult, like a big sister perhaps.

Actually, Macie already has a big sister. Jodi is in Grade 12 at Southgate High and a strong role model to her Grade 9 sibling. As the interview progresses I suspect that it might be Jodi's influence that has led Macie to participate in my research. When I ask Macie about aspects of apartheid history, she tells me what Jodi thinks. And when I ask Macie about how apartheid has influenced her life, she tells me what Jodi thinks. And what Jodi thinks is that apartheid was wrong and now White people have to make amends.

"Do you speak about these issues at home?" I inquire, keen to get a better sense of what's shaping this young mind.

"All the time," answers Macie, "Jodi and my dad talk about it all the time."

"And what does your dad think?"

Macie winces slightly; "My dad fought with the South African Defense Force when he was young, so he doesn't agree with my sister."

"And what do you think?"

"I haven't decided yet," she squirms.

Macie made the greatest effort of all the students to be my friend during the ten months I spent observing her class at Southgate High. Her cousin was about to begin studies at the University of Oxford, and her mother was British – indeed, from the same town as my father. This seemed to mark out an exclusive connection and set us on an equal footing, despite the generational divide. Often Macie would greet me at my desk before class started and ask how I was. On a few occasions she would send me chatty WhatsApp messages, telling me what she was doing or reading; “Also thought I’d tell you that I’ve read *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* and Anne Frank’s diary... Is it bad to say that Anne Frank isn’t that interesting?”

Her enjoyment of the focus groups was clear. After each one she would send a WhatsApp message thanking me, and suggesting that we schedule more. This enthusiasm proved extremely valuable, and I often relied on Macie to organize the other students to participate. Yet her ‘researcher sidekick’ role also granted Macie the privilege of asking questions in the focus group rather than answering them. Indeed, looking over the transcripts it is interesting how rarely Macie expresses an opinion, but rather poses a question to the others about what we have been discussing. “Does he speak about politics really?” she asks her classmates for example, when we discuss Mr. Cilliers’ political views.

Although never explicitly discussed, I sensed that these questions about legacies of apartheid were at the heart of a family dispute between her older sister Jodi, and her father. Jodi was an outspoken personality in the school who studied history at matric level with Mr. Cilliers. During the assembly marking Human Rights Day, Jodi had prepared a moving presentation, and the teachers in the staffroom referred to Macie as “Jodi’s younger sister”. Yet to agree with Jodi was to actively position oneself as someone opposed to the actions and beliefs of her father, who in his youth had been an ardent supporter of apartheid. I once made the mistake of referring to this tension in a focus group, inviting Macie to speak more about what it means to disagree with parents about legacies of apartheid. She stared at the table and didn’t reply.

Meena

I pack away the teapot and the leftover cake for the last time. My focus group participants are in high spirits, cavorting around the empty classroom putting the desks back in place. The exams are over, and while they are sad that our 'tea parties' have finished, they have enjoyed being part of this research.

"You've made me see how interesting history is, Mrs. Robinson," chirps Esther.

"Not enough to take it for matric!" teases back Macie, and the rest laugh.

A reliable participant yet quiet voice in these focus groups has been Meena. Meena has commented frequently on how she struggles with history, and this year in particular she has been disappointed with her grades. When the other students speak, she often agrees. This has surprised me, since as the only Coloured student in the group I had anticipated something different. Indeed, in our first interview, ten months previous, she struck me as a student whose family had instilled a strong sense of activist pride in their cultural heritage.

Today, however, as the others say goodbye Meena does want to talk.

"I think you should interview my aunty as part of your research," she begins. "She works at Stellenbosch University and she has lots of opinions about how apartheid affected our lives."

"Interesting!", I reply encouragingly, and invite Meena to walk with me as I take the mugs back to the staffroom. She can't stay, she explains, because her lift has arrived, but she'll message me.

Later that evening I receive a WhatsApp message from Meena, not on our Southgate High group chat, but privately. She sends me six screenshots of her aunt's Twitter posts, all which talk about the racist culture at Stellenbosch and how the Open Stellenbosch movement is working to 'transform' the university.

“So interesting!!!” I reply, “She seems really strong.”

“Yes she is really strong about it,” texts back Meena, “Because she was considered the darkest in her family, she always felt really shut out and like she didn’t belong.”

“I can definitely see how she has influenced your thinking,” I probe, “just in terms of how society was affected by apartheid.”

“Yes, it’s a thing that is often spoken about in my family. Because with our families, we feel that it’s our history, it’s what our family went through. It’s what makes us, us.”

Meena spoke movingly about the effect that apartheid had on her family, despite coming from a family wealthy enough to send her to Southgate High. In our first interview she described how a relative with particularly pale skin had managed to reclassify her race under apartheid from Coloured to White. However in doing so this relative was no longer able to socialize with her Coloured family, even to the extent of not attending to her parents in old age. Meena used this as a quintessential example of the damaging effects of apartheid, while also holding the relative responsible for choosing to abandon her family.

Meena was never outspoken during our focus groups, and indeed her contributions diminished over the course of the three focus groups that I conducted. I suspected that this might be because her knowledge and opinions regarding apartheid differed from those of her classmates, and she felt marginalized. It was clear that Meena spoke at length with her family about their experiences under apartheid, saying for example that “apartheid, that’s one thing that my dad and I always speak about, so that’s why... I didn’t learn anything new [in class].” When the White students in the focus group claimed that “apartheid didn’t kill anyone directly”, Meena countered the point with a story she heard from her father:

“These people were driving in a truck and then these people drove past and cause, umm... the students were protesting for better schooling for Coloured and Blacks and then the truck passed and they were still running and then policemen got out and started shooting people.”

She was also interested in South African current affairs and politics, assessing voting habits according to race. She argued, for example, that “because most people vote for the ANC and most Blacks and Coloureds don’t want to vote for the DA because Helen Zille was White, so what happens if she decides to make it almost like another apartheid, so they’d rather vote for a Black party.” Her peers, by contrast, did not know which party Helen Zille belonged to.

What was striking about Meena’s contributions to the focus groups was that they were routinely ignored or neutralized by the other students. Although not a loner, I do not remember Meena having a close group of friends at the school. She sat near me in class and often greeted me, but her lack of confidence in the focus groups meant that I did not nurture the connection as I had with Macie. However re-visiting the focus group transcripts, Meena stands out as an interesting voice among her classmates who in contrast felt disconnected from South Africa and its society.

Implications of the study

The ethnographic descriptions offered in Part One provide a context for analysis and discussion of the ways in which historical legacies were constructed in the classroom. Southgate High had several unusual characteristics which influenced the style of engagement within history lessons.

Southgate High was the wealthiest and most expensive of the four schools in this study, charging four times more than Stamford High. Resources were available to engage history students in documentaries and online resources they could access from home. It was assumed that students came from high income families, and parents expected their children to achieve academically. A lot of attention was therefore

placed on exam preparation, as well as the emotional support deemed necessary to manage such high expectations.

Southgate High was also the only school in this sample with a majority-White teacher and student population. The racial exclusivity that characterized the school's history was reflected in its colonial style traditions and architecture. This lent itself to a focus on European history rather than apartheid history, and indeed a rather noticeable tension around issues relating to the apartheid past. Unlike in other schools, it could not be assumed that all teachers and parents celebrated the end of apartheid.

Mr. Cilliers was the oldest of the teachers in this sample, and the teacher who most strongly identified with his role in the apartheid resistance. This experience, coupled with the recent passing of his wife and the anticipation of retirement, might explain the level of emotion he evoked when teaching history. He was furthermore an extremely experienced teacher who taught with a lot of confidence and often departed from the curriculum when he felt that it did not do justice to what the students needed to know.

While these characteristics do not make a certain engagement with legacy constructions inevitable, they may help to frame the analysis below.

Part Two

In Part Two I describe the ways in which historical legacies were constructed in the classroom, and in doing so I seek to understand how students learned to think about the relationship between past and present. As described in Chapter 4 I unpack this engagement with legacies of the past first by exploring the way that Alfie Cilliers spoke about the relationship between the past and the present, and then by looking at how the students spoke about the relationship between the past and the present.

In regard to the way history was taught, I focus on Mr. Cilliers' construction of history as being either continuous or discontinuous with the present, as well as to what extent past circumstances can be causally

linked to present circumstances. In regard to how students use and construct apartheid legacies I focus on how Southgate High students explain contemporary social issues, and how the personal histories of the students as well as their history classes relate to their use of the past. I do not assume that the way historical legacies are constructed or used by the students is a direct result of the way it is taught by Mr. Cilliers. Rather, I seek to explore the interactions in the classroom, and the ways in which ideas about the past and the present are expressed and mediated by both the teacher and the students.

How historical legacies are constructed by the teacher

Mr. Cilliers' comments about the relationship between the past and the present were sparse. He often situated his students' attention squarely in the past. Indeed, on one occasion while giving careers guidance to his Grade 9 class he commented that "history doesn't turn everyone on. It's all about the past and none about the present." In this section I will describe how Mr. Cilliers spoke about this relationship between past and present in reference to 'continuity' and 'discontinuity', before then turning to look at how relationships of causality were constructed. I also present instances where connections between the past and the present could have been made, and analyze how and why they were avoided.

Continuity and discontinuity

Throughout the year, Mr. Cilliers predominantly made reference to present-day South Africa as being discontinuous with the past, and on only rare occasions implied that it was continuous. Similar to the categories I used in the previous chapter, by "continuous" I refer to statements that Mr. Cilliers made that implicitly or explicitly suggest that present-day South Africa is the same as South Africa of the past. By "discontinuous" I refer to statements that Mr. Cilliers made that implicitly or explicitly suggest that present-day South Africa is different from South Africa in the past.

For example, on one occasion Mr. Cilliers said to his students that "All of you have political, social, and economic rights but back in the day only White people had these." In this statement Mr. Cilliers is

communicating that “back in the day” is different to today. Similarly, he claims that “I’m sure in 2018 you can’t imagine it but from your interviews you can see lots of human rights that have been violated.” This is again referring to a past in which human rights are violated; a past so different that one cannot even imagine it.

Furthermore, when Mr. Cilliers speaks about the past as being discontinuous with the present, he always refers to this as being positive. This is especially true when he describes how people have overcome the abuses of apartheid, and managed to thrive despite what they have suffered:

“I was talking to Mrs. Roberts today and she said that when they were forcibly removed, her brother had to change school and he was traumatized and he failed. Boys weren’t that nice to him. Now he’s gone on to university.”

“Why did the National Party introduce apartheid laws? Often it was to take really good land away from people and put them in a less nice place like Mitchell’s Plain. If you look at old photos it is just sand, no trees. People have done amazing things.”

The overwhelming tone is triumphalist, communicating that the evils of the past has been overcome – traumatized children go on to university, and people do “amazing things” with neighborhoods which were once sand. This was reinforced by videos of interviews with Holocaust survivors who described overcoming the horrors of the concentration camps and who Mr. Cilliers described as “determined to live”. Emphasis was placed on how Holocaust survivors went on to “have many children”, and live fulfilling lives. It was furthermore reflected in the demographic of the Coloured and Black people that the students socialized with, who – apart from domestic workers – were overwhelmingly middle class and did not appear to be victims of apartheid. There was therefore very little sense that the abuses of apartheid, or indeed the Holocaust, had continued to the present day.

One thing that was continuous with the past however, were emotions. As one student commented to the class, “people don’t forget about emotional scars.” The idea that emotion from the past continues to the present day was a persistent focus of the class, particularly when speaking about the oral history project. For example, when describing the oral history project to the students, Mr. Cilliers explained that he wanted the students to ask “how the [apartheid] law affected that person, how it made them feel, how it makes them feel today.” Interestingly there was no instruction to ask how the apartheid laws economically or socially affected them today. The students overwhelmingly reported that their interviewees were sad when recounting their life under apartheid.

Very rarely Mr. Cilliers spoke about the ways in which society in the past is continuous with society in the present. For example, he commented, “You still see it now. Not many Black people living in Constantia, not many White people living in Langa.” He also commented, “Some people still don’t have these rights, whereas you have a choice. Most people still don’t have a choice.” When continuity was evoked it was always presented as something which was negative, however these comments were very brief and did not lead to further discussion. Unlike in Mr. Richardson’s class, there was no unpacking of the “mechanism” which explained why not many Black people lived in Constantia, for example.

The combined effect of the way in which Mr. Cilliers spoke about history as being continuous or discontinuous with the present over the course of the year was to position the past as something which we have progressed from, and indeed which we should keep at a distance. One of his students summed it up when she said that “I think he speaks about it [apartheid] in terms of the past, but obviously it’s still a thing that we talk about.” Although it was over, the students believed that apartheid still had relevant lessons for them. They thought that one of the ways to ensure that we do not revisit this past is by learning from previous mistakes, and by being vigilant against hate or discrimination. “In order for you to be able to identify when your human rights are violated, you need to be able to see it in others” argued Mr. Cilliers.

In efforts to make apartheid relevant to the class, this past was used to draw analogies between Nazi discrimination against the Jews, and school bullying. Students were grilled on the ways in which they could resist bullying behavior; “How many of you have been bystanders?”, Mr. Cilliers asked during one lesson; “What could you do to resist?” He then went on to discuss the ways in which people under apartheid resisted, asking students to write down and compare resistance to apartheid and resistance to bullying. Since, according to Mr. Cilliers, “hate can lead to death”, this was history education’s contribution to keeping the past at bay. “What is the point of all those people dying,” he once asked my bewildered husband, “if our students don’t learn from the mistakes of the past?”

Causal relationships between past and present

Mr. Cilliers almost never constructed causal relationships between the past and present, and indeed often resisted or deflected when students tried to. In the following three examples, students make reference to legacy constructions, and in each of the three occasions Mr. Cilliers moves the conversation away from a more in-depth discussion of the issues they raised:

Example 1. The students are reflecting on what they learned from their oral history project. Each student was asked to interview someone who had been affected by an apartheid law:

S: Grandmother, she was uprooted from her home [as a result of the Group Areas Act]. She still lives there today, and it is almost all Black people.

T: So you feel upbeat. You have a lot of information [for your oral history project].

Example 2. The students are given a list of apartheid laws and asked to categorize them into social, economic, or political forms of discrimination:

S: We said social and economic [discrimination]. Social – it forbade people interacting with each other. Economic - it affected how qualified we'd be in the future and how much money we received.

T: OK, Bantu education. OK, this was very important.

Example 3. Same as Example 2.

S: It's also economic [discrimination] because they had poor quality education, so they're not qualified to get a good job so it's a cycle on the roll of poverty.

T: She's on a roll! Social and economic, not going to get good jobs so the cycle goes on forever.

Only on one occasion did Mr. Cilliers hint at the construction of a causal relationship between apartheid history and peoples' economic circumstances today:

T: Often economic circumstances are related to the history of apartheid when the finances weren't there. And if you go to Harring [High School] everyone has big houses, and although you're there you still feel excluded.

Harring High School is one of the most expensive private schools in South Africa, charging fees almost twice that of what Southgate High charges. Mr. Cilliers' statement is confusing; although he suggests that people may be poor today because of apartheid discrimination, he then speaks about the ways in which Southgate High students might feel excluded in one of the only schools more elite than theirs. He is therefore either positioning his largely White class as being in a position of historical disadvantage, or – if he is referring to a generic “you” – he is making reference to historically disadvantaged people who may not have big houses but are going to an extremely expensive school.

Mr. Cilliers was not a teacher who was afraid of having discussions in his class, or indeed of addressing moral issues. The history that he taught – including very graphic photos from Nazi concentration camps – was often distressing. Indeed, when the students recounted the distressing and emotive stories they heard during their oral interview project, Mr. Cilliers commented, “History is not for wimps. You gotta be tough to take that.” It was therefore curious that he steered so clear of conversations that might imply contemporary legacies of apartheid, even when students – mostly Black and Coloured – began to construct those connections for themselves.

I suspect that the answer might have something to do with the incident captured in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter. On the last day of the school year a Coloured student challenged Mr. Cilliers to explain why there was a school in Cape Town named after D.F. Malan, the architect of apartheid. She phrased the charge in relation to the school being “exclusive”, saying that “I don’t think that I would be welcome there.” This reference to a sense of ‘inclusion’ and ‘feeling welcome’ was the language that had been used in the Dialogue Day workshops, and Nisha was now applying what she had been taught to a different school context. She was using history to construct an explanation for why she wouldn’t be welcome. “It means more than a name,” her friend offered, “it needs to have more of a meaning behind it.”

Some of the White students however resisted the legacy construction that Nisha introduced. “I wouldn’t have minded going to that school,” a student argued, “it’s just Afrikaans. I don’t think it’s about legacy.” Another student concurred, “It’s the same as the statue at UCT¹¹, it’s just a person.” The claim that “I don’t think it’s about legacy”, and “it’s just a person”, seemed to be a willful resistance to the idea that D.F. Malan High School was named after a specific historical figure, and that this history might have contemporary consequences regarding how people felt.

¹¹ A statue of the colonialist Cecil Rhodes was removed from the University of Cape Town (UCT) campus as a consequence of the Rhodes Must Fall movement in 2015.

As a result of this discussion, the class – who had discussed harrowing historical atrocities with calm – became agitated and divided. Students were rising from their seats, raising their hands in the hope that they would be allowed to speak. Other students were throwing dirty looks and making judgmental noises in a way that I hadn't previously observed. Mr. Cilliers, usually so in control, seemed nervous and did not express an opinion either way. The issue of whether a school should be named after an apartheid figure was deeply controversial to this class and made apparent racial divides that had been hidden when the history being discussed was safely in the past.

I reflected therefore that there was a difference between difficult history – such as the gassing of children – and controversial history, which makes contemporary moral demands of us. The moral demands that Mr. Cilliers teaching had previously implied were universal and vague; protect human rights, do not discriminate, be kind. However Nisha's claim that history had caused something problematic in the present that needed to change was viewed as an attack on White culture. The same reaction might have occurred if Mr. Cilliers had explored why the Black student's grandmother still lived in the underprivileged neighborhood she was exiled to, or why those who were educated under Bantu education struggled to get professional jobs today. These examples positioned the historical choices of White people as the causes of the contemporary suffering of Black people. They antagonized the class and were therefore to be avoided.

How historical legacies are constructed by the students

The relationship between past and present

The students that participated in the interviews and focus groups that I held at Southgate High School were the most privileged of all the students in the study. They came from wealthy families who invested heavily in education, as well as in experiences such as international travel and sports. All these families,

with the exception of Meena's, were White and would have therefore enjoyed legal and economic privilege under apartheid.

There were multiple ways in which the relationship between past and present was spoken about, and this was complicated by the diverse family histories that were present in the group. In this section I try to untangle some of the different ways in which historical legacies were constructed and negotiated by the students.

The way in which the students believed the past had influenced their present lives differed remarkably according to race. Macie and Alice, the two White students in the focus group, felt that the past did not impact them or their families. In response to whether or not their lives would be different if apartheid hadn't happened, Macie answered that "I wasn't affected that much by apartheid. I don't think that much about it. I don't really speak to anyone." Later in the conversation she said, "I think it would be the same, I can't think of anything." Similarly, Alice concludes that "personally no, because my family wasn't really affected by it."

This sentiment was reflected in class discussions when students were deciding who should be interviewed for their oral history project. The criterion was "someone who had been affected by an apartheid law", and the students were uncertain whether a White person would fit that description. Indeed, none of the White students in the class felt that their parents had been affected by apartheid. It was interesting in these cases that social, economic, or political privileges were not seen as an "effect" of apartheid, and indeed at no time in the focus group or in the class were White people identified as beneficiaries of apartheid.

According to Esther and Meena however, the past had a significant impact on their present. Esther, a Black student who was adopted by White parents, speculated that apartheid might have caused her to be put up for adoption, and therefore radically altered the course of her life;

“Well I think it would definitely be different for me because often I think about what financial situation were my biological parents in and if they had been, if there hadn’t been apartheid I might have still been with them, because it might have been a financial situation that made me end up being adopted and everything so I definitely would have had a different life.”

This is neither a positive nor negative reflection. Esther has a good relationship with her adoptive parents and recognizes that unlike many other Black people in South Africa she has had access to a quality education. However, the racism that she sometimes faces – for example when White people assume she is poor – she constructs as a legacy of apartheid that affects her negatively.

Curiously, Meena believed that apartheid affected her positively, despite being the only student raised by parents who were discriminated under apartheid. “I feel like if there wasn’t apartheid then I wouldn’t be living where I am living today,” she explains, “because apartheid made my parents want to work harder and yeah. Like my daddy wanted to get a good education because he went to a school – I don’t know how to explain it – but they wouldn’t like, be educated well.”

Interestingly when I reflected to the students that the ways in which they believed the past had influenced them may be due to their racial positioning, they were quick to dismiss this analysis. Rather, all the students attributed their perspective as “more to do with personality”. “It’s probably just about individual families,” suggested Meena, “because different people have different experiences.”

Apartheid was spoken about as though it was far in the past. Alice, for example, explained that “my parents don’t really talk about apartheid that much, they see it as just a thing in the past and you’re learning it in school, so we don’t need to talk more about it.” This perspective – that apartheid was “just a thing in the past” – was reinforced by the constant comparison with the Holocaust. Indeed, when one student pointed out that the Holocaust occurred much earlier than apartheid, the other students were surprised by this realization: “Oh! That makes sense!” I suspect that the discussion of how apartheid

began within the same decade as the Holocaust, combined with both periods of history being spoken about as events, caused some temporal confusion among these students.

In an extraordinary statement, when asked about whether there are similarities of guilt between Germans or White South Africans, Esther replied;

“Because it never really happened to either people. Like a German right now learning about the Holocaust, or a White person learning about apartheid. I personally think that it doesn’t really matter how severe the situation was because they weren’t a part of it. They weren’t a bystander and they weren’t a perpetrator, or resister.”

Esther suggested that unless one were alive at the time of an atrocity, to be either a bystander, perpetrator, or resister, then the seriousness of the atrocity had little impact on how one relates to it. Esther therefore enacted a “logic of narrative rupture” (Teeger, 2014), whereby the past and the present are disconnected because there is no continuity of personal experience. Since she neither experienced apartheid nor the Holocaust, her relationship with both was the same.

Indeed, the comparison between the Holocaust and apartheid often led the students to reflect that apartheid was not that bad. Alice for example said that “death is a lot bigger than racism” and “they’re recovering from the Holocaust, returning from the mass killings and genocide and all the murder, but then here we’re still dealing with all the smaller problems.” This not only positioned Europe as the place in which “big” things happen, but it also positioned South Africa as a country which is struggling to overcome the minor effects of a rather insignificant past. Esther, for example, explained:

“You know that the Jew genocide is basically, how do I explain this, it was on a larger scale, you would expect people to react more angrily or whatever to it, but apartheid was on a much lesser scale and we reacted a lot more angrily than people in the Jew genocide reacted.”

This led the students to conclude that the reason South Africa is still “recovering from” the effects of apartheid is because there is something fundamentally wrong with South Africans. “South Africa, I feel like it’s almost like we’re dumb here,” asserted Esther; “Not in a rude way but kind of backwards, like we’re cycling up a hill and you’re obese or something.”

Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of the focus group conversations was that when contemporary events or circumstances were attributed to the past, they were attributed to peoples’ feelings about the past, rather than structural aspects of South African society. Legacies were constructed almost solely as emotional legacies. The implication was that if we simply decided to think differently about the past, then the past would stop affecting us.

One of the things that the students thought South Africa needed to think differently about was race. According to Alice “the whole world is basing everything on race but really it’s just a pigment, do you know what I mean? There’s nothing that separates us. It’s literally just the color of our skin.” This sense that race was effectively meaningless – as they had been taught in history class – meant that any conversation about race that was taking place in South Africa was inherently flawed. It was perhaps reinforced by the presence of wealthy Black and Coloured classmates, whose families enjoyed equal success to their White peers. The students’ therefore concluded that those who refer to race must be doing so for insincere purposes. For example, after the Dialogue Day a White student reflected:

“Sometimes people put the situations they’re in and they relate it to race, but it’s not necessarily about race all the time.”

In a focus group Esther similarly said:

“I think there would be a lot less issues, and I mean a lot. Because people, I don’t know, people in South Africa whenever there is an issue everyone points to race, well not everyone,

but the people who are having an issue, they always point it to racism, whether or not it has nothing to do with the color of your skin.”

Esther attributed the same insincere motive to people who advocated for reparations:

“I think South Africa is not very forgiving of like the past because like now that apartheid has happened, I’m speaking in general, about what I know at least, Black people will often, they’ll try to take back what was once theirs rather than try to like you know, move forward, but it’s just, it kind of bothers me because I’ve like never had a problem with race, as I said, I don’t really see color unless I’m speaking about it obviously, but like, it’s just like, I always think of President Zuma, he’s trying to take away peoples’ money and stuff like that just because of apartheid and stuff like that and he was greedy and everything but he wouldn’t share it amongst, he wouldn’t really share it amongst people of his own color, he just wanted it for himself and that kind of bothers me.”

In her comment, Esther claims that South Africa’s problems are not legacies of apartheid as some people have claimed, but rather because “South Africa is not very forgiving” of the past. The responsibility seems to lie with those who are aggrieved to forgive and “move forward”.

Macie, in a similar vein, saw South Africa’s problems with race as being universal, “but we just put the laws based on race, so we keep going back to apartheid but every other country has the same problem.” The implication was therefore that South Africa is not exceptional, but our referral to a previous system of laws made South Africans think that their situation was exceptional.

That was not to say that racism in South Africa didn’t exist. As Alice explained, “there’s still racism, there’s still discrimination, that will always be there in terms of apartheid.” When an instance of overt racism made media headlines Alice and her family would link it to apartheid, but as the students agreed, this was very rare; “only one time has that happened”. And again, racism – according to the students –

was founded on an illogical perception that race existed; it would disappear if people chose to stop thinking that about it.

Indeed, the country's response to the inequalities of the past, such as affirmative action, were perceived as a response to the perception of inequality, rather than inequality itself. For example, Macie commented that "The reason that they have the race settings [quotas] is because if they have a White-dominant [university student population] then they're going to say "Oh, you're going back to apartheid." The problem with having a majority-White student population was not a concern with social justice, but rather a concern with "their" perceptions of the situation. If "they" didn't perceive a problem, then we wouldn't need a quota.

Alice took the emphasis on emotion and responses to the past one step further when she argued that the San and the Khoi effectively invited violence and slavery by not sharing the land with the colonizers;

"We didn't benefit from it. We kind of took it the wrong way and made it hard for ourselves. It's like, colonialism happened that made us more civilized but then certain things, I'm not sure, happened that made it worse. Slavery was introduced when the Europeans and the San and the Khoi were trading and stuff, that was just them trying to half the land and share it out and then it got to the point where they didn't want to share and said this is our land, we didn't want to give it to you, so they got violent, so instead of trying to make it like they're benefiting from the making our country more civilized, they immediately turned to violence and that led to slavery and so on."

The implication is that had "we" – by which she means the original inhabitants of South Africa – responded to the colonizers by welcoming their civilizing mission, rather than taking it the "wrong way", then we wouldn't have suffered so much. The exact meaning of this statement is difficult to ascertain. Similar to Esther, she is once again placing responsibility for the difficulties of the past on the shoulders

of South Africans, and how they respond to people trying to take away their land. The responsibilities of the colonialists are notably absent.

These comments are not to say that the Southgate High students perceived no structural effects of apartheid, but rather these constructions were overshadowed by the overwhelming emphasis on the emotional responses and perceptions of the past. Indeed, comments about how the past has shaped the present in regards to poverty or inequality were rare. The few times when it was suggested that apartheid did have structural effects, these suggestions were offered by Meena. When asked about the long-term effects of apartheid, for example, she said;

“I think South Africa is still racially divided, sort of thing, because there are still people who live in shacks and the White people sort of still live in Bishops Court and stuff like that.”

In another interesting exchange, the students discussed the ways in which apartheid shaped South Africa – again in relation to the Holocaust. Meena asked, “also aren’t we like a Third World country, so we also don’t really have the money, and Germany is a First World country so has financial stability.” This prompted immediate affirmation from the other students, and Alice responded, “We don’t have the money to build houses to help the people who are living in shacks to build houses, but Germany has the money to rebuild synagogues and houses that were burnt down.” This comparison of a lack of houses in South Africa with the destruction of synagogues in Nazi Germany implied that South Africa’s lack of houses was as a result of historical events. However, it sidestepped the issue that the houses occupied by Black and Coloured people were not destroyed, but were rather occupied by White families. Unlike the burning of synagogues, the Group Areas Act had material beneficiaries as well as casualties; it contributed not just to poverty but also to inequality.

Understanding contemporary issues: Education access

Affirmative action in regards to university admissions was an issue that the students at Southgate High were particularly interested in. I have chosen this contemporary issue as a case study to explore the ways in which students use what they learned in history class to interpret their society.

The students in the Southgate High focus group – with the exception of Meena – believed that being White would be a disadvantage when applying to university. As Alice explained:

“Like Black, Coloured, and Chinese and Indian people are getting a preference. Like I have a story, I think I told you the first time, my mom’s friend, she applied to university. She was a straight-A student and she didn’t get in because she was White.”

Esther agreed and contributed:

“I was speaking to my friend about this, but they said something about Black students only needing lower marks or something like that to get into UCT than someone who is White. Like someone who is White has to get like 80s or 90s or something like that, and then other people have to get 60s and I find that really frustrating although it’s benefiting in a way.”

The fear that White students would not be admitted to university was so severe that Alice’s parents were planning to emigrate from South Africa to New Zealand so that she could attend university there. Affirmative action for university admission was seen as evidence that South Africa was still beset by racial discrimination, similar to the kind experienced under apartheid. “They keep referring back to the past,” vented Esther; “Like I know it’s good that you must learn from the past and stuff like that but learning from the past does not mean trying to repeat it but in the reverse.” While for Alice affirmative action was a hypocrisy;

“I think everyone is saying that but they don’t do anything about it, like everyone is saying you shouldn’t base it on your color of your skin, they should base it on your marks, your history, and all that kind of stuff, people keep on saying that but then they don’t stand up for it.”

The fear among these students was that Black students would game the system by not even trying to pass their exams. Esther explained;

“I feel like that’s really dumb though because I think sometimes people who aren’t White, they are also taking advantage of these small things, so they’re like ‘ack, I’m not going to really work hard but I’ll get into university anyway’.”

While remaining largely silent until this point, Meena then stepped in and questioned Esther and Alice’s narrative;

“When has that happened? I’ve never heard of UCT trying to accept people because of the color of their skin. Because my aunt actually works for the people that accept other people into university and she said that it’s mostly based on your marks.”

The other students were skeptical that Meena was correct – “Yeah, but would she [your aunt] tell you?” questioned Macie. In fact, Meena had the most accurate understanding of UCT admissions which take into consideration many factors, for which the overall racial demographics of the university are only a small consideration. However it is interesting to note that Meena did not agree that affirmative action was right, but rather that it did not exist.

The issue of whether affirmative action should be based on race, hinged on the question of whether Black teenagers today were still disadvantaged by apartheid, despite having been born after 1994. All of the students, including Meena, were skeptical that any young South African today would be disadvantaged. As Alice argued:

“They’re basing it on the past because the Black people didn’t get as high education under apartheid and the Whites did, they are expecting that the Blacks are dumb and they don’t have enough education so they are giving them lower marks to get jobs... but you don’t know if that person who is studying as a Black person has a lower education because of their situation under apartheid. They might have still had greater education.”

During this discussion I pushed back against these views, asking “if your parent had Bantu education, do you think that you would be disadvantaged by that?” The answers were as follows:

Meena: *“I think that maybe they want to give the children the education that they never had, so they can get good jobs and money and steady income, mostly the income. But I don’t think it would disadvantage them at all.”*

Esther: *“Only if they were trying to base their knowledge on what their parents knew then probably they would be disadvantaged because of their parents... but then again... like for example, the interviewee that I interviewed, she was saying how her mom didn’t get an education, yeah she didn’t get an education but she’s still a very smart person, so if the people who were disadvantaged back then, like parents and grandparents, if they were willing enough to learn things that we were learning now then I’m pretty sure that their kids won’t be disadvantaged.”*

Alice: *“If they tried to get a better job than what they were doing as a gardener or something, if they got secretary work or a doctor or something that had more money to pay then I don’t think it would affect the child.”*

It is interesting that once again Esther and Alice argued that someone’s wealth or educational opportunity resulted from their personal willingness to try, rather than the circumstances of their birth. In all of these answers there was a clear sense that one could overcome historical disadvantage, and therefore affirmative action was unfair. According to the students, there was no reason why a Black child should

be more educationally disadvantaged than a White child in 2018. Unlike at Stamford High, neither the students nor teacher constructed mechanisms which explained whether inter-generational poverty persisted. Only Macie claimed otherwise; “I don’t think it’s the parent’s thing to be willing about it. I think a lot of people don’t have a choice.”

Unsurprisingly there was not full agreement among the focus group students about whether apartheid affected the educational opportunities of young people in contemporary South Africa. Indeed, to some extent the views of the students were influenced by the racial backgrounds of their families and the experiences or opinions that were shared at home. This was similar to Stamford High, where views on the relationship between apartheid and contemporary gang violence differed between the Black and Coloured students. However, what is interesting about the Southgate High students was the extent to which they foregrounded personal responsibility, both in terms of one’s emotional response to the past, and one’s willingness to work hard.

Conclusion

The data collected from these classroom observations and focus groups provide a rich insight into the various ways in which history was used – or not used – to interpret contemporary South Africa. Not only was the apartheid curriculum largely replaced in this class by discussions on human rights and the Holocaust, but when South African history was spoken about it was placed firmly in the past. Indeed, the past was presented as discontinuous with the present; while we could learn from the past, it had largely been overcome.

The strong focus on emotion and how people felt when they experienced historical traumas provided a central narrative to the teaching. Students were encouraged to feel sad as a legitimate response to human rights abuses, and sadness was seen as a primary consequence of abuse. It was therefore not surprising that students learned to construct emotion – or indeed perception – as a central apartheid legacy. Racism,

or racially-motivated complaining, were seen as irrational leftovers from the past. The students rarely identified aspects of South Africa's society that could be attributed to structural legacies. Intergenerational poverty, for example, was interpreted as a lack of willingness to succeed, rather than a lack of opportunity.

The exception to these views was Meena, who grew increasingly muted over the course of our focus group sessions. Although her understanding of structural privilege was not as developed or articulate as that of the Stamford High students, she did challenge the narrative that apartheid was irrelevant or in the distant past. There was an interplay between Meena's family's history and the history she was learning at school that created a tentative uneasiness between her views and those of her classmates. This interplay will be explored further in Chapter 9.

Chapter 7

Case Study 3: Historical Legacies at Thokozani High School

Introduction

“Come on man! Take one, take one! You’re wasting time!”

The irony of this accusation is not lost on me. Mr. Mzamane has arrived halfway through the lesson and is now playing catch-up. But the students – who have had their heads on the desk for the past twenty minutes – are slow to shake awake. They reluctantly shiver to life in the dark and draughty classroom.

“OK, let’s do this,” Mr. Mzamane motivates; “You have this, all of you, yes? You have questions 3, 4, 5, yes?” The students pull the pages towards them, browsing casually the photocopied sheets they have been handed. “You have answers but please don’t answer them. Your interviewee must answer these questions, and don’t tell them what to say because you want to know what they say.”

One by one Mr. Mzamane talks through the questions for the oral history project, helping to explain the difficult vocabulary; “What does ‘implement’ mean? Nothing? OK, it means to apply it for the first time.”

The questions start off rather factual – “When did the law begin and end? How did people respond?” – but as their tone turns political the students begin to look up; “Number 8, ‘Do you feel our country has changed?’” The class murmurs curiosity. Then, “Number 9, How would you respond if the ANC adopted the same discriminatory laws against Whites?”

“Yoh!” cry out some of the boys from the back. He has got their attention. Mr. Mzamane doubles down, smiling as he capitalizes on this interest; “White people would have to carry passes... They wouldn’t be allowed to go to certain areas...”

The students start to laugh and chant, “Yes, yes, yes!”

“...They would be arbitrarily arrested, and beaten by the police... And then put in prison and beaten again!”

“Yes! Yes! Yes!”

Finally, Mr. Mzamane throws his fist in the air and shouts, “Amandla!”¹²

“Awethu!” call back the students, each with a clenched fist.

The teacher turns his head to look at me as I sit in the corner; “Natasha, you must get ready.”

Chapter Structure

This chapter addresses the question of how Grade 9 students in Thokozani High School learn to construct historical legacies. It furthermore seeks to explore how they learn to understand and explain contemporary South African social issues – such as ideas regarding racialized power as described in the vignette above – and whether the history they learn is a feature in those explanations.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part One I offer thick ethnographic descriptions of Thokozani High School, as well as ethnographic biographies of two students and their history teacher. In Part Two I concentrate on the ways in which historical legacies were constructed by the teacher and the students.

¹² “Amandla”, and its common response “Awethu” translates as “The power – is ours”.

Part One

School portrait

“Will you take history next year?” I ask, trying to make small talk with the student beside me as we wait for Mr. Mzamane to arrive.

She shakes her head coyly; “I like history,” she explains, “but I don’t like the history classrooms.”

I can see what she means. The history classrooms are temporary structures at the back of the school. It hasn’t rained for a week, yet the ground outside is still flooded. Students have erected stepping stones over the muddy water by using bricks and pallets. They deftly jump from one to the other. I, however, often end up with wet feet.

When Mr. Mzamane eventually arrives, he comes armed with photocopies, and an explanation that “something is wrong with that machine”. Indeed, an inch of text down the left margin has been cut off making the notes almost incomprehensible. “OK guys, let’s fix this damage.”

The teacher begins to read out the notes, highlighting the missing words; “The National Party Government. It only shows ‘ent’, from ‘government’. The next one is ‘The life and work’. ‘Work’ is there, but you need to add ‘the life and...’.

All of a sudden there is a commotion in the next room. The class freezes as we all stop to listen. Something is shouted in isiXhosa. “Yoh!” exclaim the students, and Mr. Mzamane quickly leaves to investigate. I search around for an explanation. “Someone is calling another person by their mother’s name,” a student explains, inviting me to share in the excitement of controversy.

We wait five minutes. Mr. Mzamane returns, again with an explanation for me; “I had to go to the next classroom because the students were shouting rude things and we do not teach them to behave like that.”

I nod graciously, dismissing the need for accountability, as we return to spend the final moments of the class fixing the photocopier's damage.

Thokozani High School is “a township school in the suburbs”. It began life in the township of Khayelitsha, where it shared a building with another high school. However with the birth of democracy in South Africa, it was able to relocate to an empty school building in an historically-White area of the city. Initially the presence of Black teachers and students caused anger among the White residents, but there was no longer the legal infrastructure to prevent movement based on race.

Years after the relocation, Thokozani High still attracts an entirely Black isiXhosa speaking student population. It is therefore the most racially homogenous of all the schools in my sample. Almost all the students commute long distances to attend school from the townships. The proximity of the school to a taxi rank assists with this commute. However taxi strikes can leave Thokozani High virtually empty for days on end. During the first week of my fieldwork a taxi strike meant that only seven of the forty Grade 9 students were able to attend class.

With school fees of R1000 per year, Thokozani High is the most affordable of the schools in my sample, and indeed attracts the most financially disadvantaged students. It is notable however, that like Stamford High School, parents pay approximately R6000 per year for their child's taxi fare to and from school. For the students who were financially struggling, there were funds available to cover school fees and help with transport costs. However unlike Stamford High this offer was rarely made public. When I asked about students who might be struggling financially, Mr. Mzamane explained that the school did not address this issue explicitly because they did not want to embarrass anyone. An angry teacher, for example, might in the heat of the moment say something hurtful about a student's financial situation.

It was difficult to gauge the poverty of the students at Thokozani High. Some students, like Anathi and Thandiwe, had fathers with professional jobs. Khwezi's mother worked in an orphanage, while Dumisa's mother was a domestic worker. Both Zintle's parents were deceased, and she lived with her older sister. A Grade 11 student that I spoke to claimed that she could only afford to come to school three days a week, and that a shack fire had recently destroyed her home and killed her uncle.

Given the limited resources available to the students I was curious why parents spent so much money transporting their children to a school in the suburbs. According to Mr. Mzamane the main concern for parents was safety. The environment of the school, away from the townships, instilled a better quality of behavior in the students. As a result, the matriculation grades were higher than in many township schools. This was not to say that there were not some disciplinary issues. The school had experienced two instances of violence in Mr. Mzamane's memory; once when a student stabbed another student with a pair of scissors, and a second time when someone from outside the school came into a classroom and stabbed a Thokozani High student. Minor theft was also prevalent; this was the only school where staff and students warned me to protect my belongings.

The world that these students inhabited at times felt alien to me, yet the school itself was less than 2km from Southgate High. I frequently worried whether I had enough cultural familiarity with these students and teachers to accurately represent them in my research. I worried that the 'White', 'privileged' lens that I viewed the school through might result in descriptions of what the school lacked, rather than what it offered.

The management of the school, for example, was often frustrating. Thokozani High ran on a 7-day timetable, which meant that the class schedule did not correspond to the day of the week. If Monday was 'Day 1', and Tuesday was a public holiday, then Wednesday would be 'Day 2'. While helpful in managing frequent school closures – for example, due to taxi strikes – this schedule meant that teachers and students were often uncertain which classes they had that day. If a day were to end an hour early,

every class that day would be shortened by 7 minutes. Furthermore, on some days the teachers would rotate classrooms, whereas on other days the students would rotate. There was often confusion as to which day was which. On one occasion classes started late because someone forgot to ring the bell.

The constant uncertainty over the timetable meant that it was difficult to identify students who were skipping class. There were students chatting, eating, and playing football at all times of the day. While the entrance by the front gate was controlled by a security guard, the back of the school was enclosed by a wall which the male students could easily jump over. I frequently observed students leaving the school premises when they should have been in class. On one occasion I watched as Mr. Mzamane berated a student who had been gambling in the school, but who had not attended history class:

“I came, you were not in class but I saw you around. What does that mean? It means you are not serious; you are wasting your parent’s money. They pay for fees, uniform, lunch, transport, and you waste it. And now you are in class because it is raining today.”

However, the teachers were also often not in class. On a number of occasions I was asked if I could teach a class because the teacher had something else to do. I often observed classes full of students with no teacher present. In these circumstances I refused to assume the role of teacher, both because I was not qualified, and because I did not want the students to mistake me for an authority figure.

Gaining access to the school was similarly difficult. The school did not respond to emails, and when I telephoned, the receptionist always told me that the relevant history teacher was not available. Eventually I visited the school without appointment and was immediately introduced to the Head of History who suggested that I conduct the research right then, without ethical consent from the students, their parents, or the headteacher. Fortunately, I was able to use the opportunity to schedule a meeting with the Grade 9 history teacher – Mr. Mzamane – who was more familiar with the ethical considerations.

The infrastructure of the school was run-down, and although care had been taken in a number of areas, it was clear that finances were lacking. The security guard at the gate, for example, was also the gardener. He had created beautiful flower beds out of old car tires, and plant pots that had been donated to the school. This elderly man lived on the school premises and opened the gates for the church congregations who rented the school hall on Sundays.

However, the further one went into the school, the more run-down it became, until right at the back the history classrooms occupied temporary buildings. Bathroom doors were smashed in, windows did not fit in the frames, the walls were mud-splashed and graffitied, chairs in the staffroom were broken and the appliances were dirty. When the students cleaned their classrooms – as per the class rota – the dust from the floor billowed so thickly that the students themselves would leave the classroom to wait for it to settle.

It was interesting to reflect on the effect that the school infrastructure had on the energy and motivation of those who worked there. If I had a break between classes for example, I would prefer to spend it at Southgate High which was clean and comfortable, rather than Thokozani High. I found myself wearing less professional clothes at Thokozani High, given that the seats and desks were often so dirty. I was less fastidious in my time-keeping, since classes routinely started late. I was more likely to reschedule commitments with Thokozani teachers and students since they often cancelled commitments with me. I did not try to learn all the students' names, because it felt overwhelming with more than 40 in the Grade 9 class. I felt the culture of the school affecting my behavior in relation to the school in a way which did not reflect my values. While this helped to generate empathy for teachers who did the same, it was also unpleasant.

While every teacher and student in the school was Black, the principal – Mr. Maartins – was White. Mr. Maartins felt absent from school life. Unlike in other schools I neither heard about him from staff or students, nor observed him address the school. On the few occasions when I did see him walking around

the school, he looked stressed and unhappy. Towards the end of the school year Thokozani High hosted a fashion show, where students could model both traditional and designer clothes that they owned. The show required suspending classes for half a day, and I overheard Mr. Maartins complaining to Mr. Mzamane that “we never should have agreed to this”. When he saw me listening in to the conversation, he asked who I was.

Being perceived as White in a predominantly-Black school meant that I was clearly identified as an outsider. Since the students and staff spoke isiXhosa to one another when not in class, I was also excluded from many of the conversations happening around me. Subsequently, I was conscious of my racial identity more than in any other school, and tried to emphasize my familiarity with Xhosa culture. The younger students – perhaps due to their lack of English fluency – were shy around me. However some of the older students were curious, and indeed very forward. A group of Grade 12 male students for example, once asked me for R10 in a tone that mocked the way that homeless people would often beg.

In regard to the history curriculum, the students were disadvantaged by their cultural background. The sections on European history, for example, assumed familiarity with the names of European countries and their capitals. Yet the students often confused “Germany” and “Berlin”. The curriculum was also wrong to assume that students knew what “Jew” and “Jewish” meant. It was therefore unsurprising that this section of the curriculum held little emotional impact. While invited every year to the Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, the Thokozani history classes never accepted the invitation.

History teacher: Luthando Mzamane

“Most learners come from the townships, and when you go to the townships you will find that not all townships are the same,” begins Mr. Mzamane as I press record on our interview.

I nod politely, yet start to suspect that Mr. Mzamane thinks I've never been to a township before. The thought both irritates and amuses me.

"There are informal settlements," he continues, "and..."

"And brick houses", I interject, eager to show that I am not completely ignorant.

"Yes, brick houses", he repeats undeterred, "and then some that form a chain. There is a block and in that block you find there are ten houses, depending on the size of the room."

"Do you mean like in Aphiwe Park...? And the township where my husband used to live?"

I want to prove myself and persuade Mr. Mzamane that I am a "good White"; someone who is on his side. Yet in class I feel that he emphasizes my outsider status, telling students to "say it in English, so Natasha can understand." I worry about how I should respond when he explains to his class that White people think they are more intelligent than Black people. Is my silence tacit agreement?

Only during our final interview together are some unspoken truths eventually shared. "Maybe it's awkward," I venture, "because my husband is a White South African."

Mr. Mzamane looks serious for a moment, raises his eyebrows, and then nods.

Luthando Mzamane was the teacher in this sample with whom I had the least personal interaction. While he welcomed me openly to conduct research in his class, he was strict and somewhat distant. Our attempts at small talk concerned his marathon training, yet never developed into friendship. I felt mistrusted, as though he believed that I was judging him.

Indeed, he was not completely wrong. In almost every class that I observed, Mr. Mzamane arrived late, and sometimes he did not arrive at all. This resulted in many hours spent sitting with the students, just waiting. When Mr. Mzamane was in class, very little history teaching actually took place. Time instead

was occupied with handing out photocopied sheets, sticking the sheets into the students' notebooks, disciplining the students, fixing photocopier mistakes, deciding which classroom to use, finding headache tablets, or arranging for students to share textbooks that half the class had forgotten. While I always sought to look encouraging and interested, Mr. Mzamane often felt the need to explain to me why he was late, or why teaching was not happening. This resulted in a dynamic between us that was difficult to address. I spent a lot of our interactions reassuring him that "I understand", and "it's fine".

Despite the relative lack of teaching, the students in Mr. Mzamane's class had a lot of respect for him. They felt he was one of their best teachers; that he was strict but fair and taught them well. On one occasion when Mr. Mzamane did not turn up to class, the students wondered aloud whether they had got the class time wrong since Mr. Mzamane was one of their most reliable teachers. A few months later, when a student teacher had lost control of the class, Mr. Mzamane arrived and immediately restored order. Disobedience was not tolerated, and on a number of occasions I observed as Mr. Mzamane asked a student to stand in front of the class and explain why they were talking when they should be listening.

Beneath the authority, however, there was fun and affection. Mr. Mzamane would often refer to the male students as *bhuti*, or "little brother". He would gently tease the students when they used an incorrect word, or make jokes using English puns; "backstab, not backstage!". Once, while reprimanding his class for listening to music rather than watching the news, he started to dance for them. He was a fantastic dancer, and his class cheered wildly. "Don't underestimate me," he concluded with a smile, before continuing, "Alright guys. There's an example of the Freedom Charter in your book..."

Although Mr. Mzamane was from the Hlubi ethnic group – rather than Xhosa – his upbringing was not so different from his students. He was born in Cape Town but spent many of his teenage years in the Eastern Cape. Living in the Eastern Cape was a father's punishment for his son's "experimentation" at a time when "so many things were happening in the township". In hindsight Mr. Mzamane praised this decision; only two of the friends he grew up with are still alive. The rest died violently.

When studying apartheid Mr. Mzamane's students understood and appreciated the personal insight that their teacher offered to them on life during that time. They also, however, recognized Mr. Mzamane's position; one in which he needed to teach a personally-traumatic subject. "I think he was going to feel very bad", explained Thandiwe, "because I think history subject has an impact to the way that he felt. Because he is teaching us, and our topics are based on what happened to him. I think all of that reminds him about it."

Despite not thinking he would study beyond matric, Mr. Mzamane was the most qualified of all the teachers in my study. He had studied history and philosophy as an undergraduate, then completed a Higher Diploma of Education at the University of Cape Town, followed by an MPhil in multicultural education in Norway. He was now looking at a Masters degree in Comparative and International Education, since he was interested in how education policy was borrowed between countries. He had four sons, one of whom was at university and another who attended an expensive private school in the Southern Suburbs.

I admit that given his academic interest in education, I was surprised that Mr. Mzamane's teaching style was largely teacher-centered. Although he routinely asked questions, these were mostly to ascertain comprehension; "Who were the Allied powers?", "How did the Berlin Wall affect families?", "Which part of Germany did the Allied powers control?" The lack of any teaching resources other than a broken photocopier and a blackboard meant that the pedagogical options were limited. Often the blackboard could not be used because Mr. Mzamane had filled it with notes for a different class which he did not want to rub off. Most history teaching therefore consisted of Mr. Mzamane reading out the notes and explaining them, followed by students answering questions from pages photocopied out of textbooks. Towards the end of the year, when time was running out, Mr. Mzamane started to write notes on A3 pieces of paper, pin the paper to the blackboard, and have students copy the notes into their books.

Moreover, the work that students were expected to do was reduced. This was due to the capacity of the teacher, rather than the students. “The Department [of Education] wants you to write 300 words,” explained Mr. Mzamane, “but I decided to reduce the words to 200, two pages, not more than 250 because you are so many. You are 250 students, so I cannot read 250 300-word essays.” The students were happy to write a shorter essay and did not seem to mind being “so many”.

Within this context of both very little actual teaching, and very little classroom discussion, it was not immediately clear what Mr. Mzamane’s personal convictions were when it came to teaching history. “When I teach I don’t show the side I’m on or what I think”, he explained during an interview; “I don’t want to be a teacher who gives instructions about these things; they must figure it out on their own”. Unlike in Mr. Cilliers’ classes, Mr. Mzamane rarely deviated from the textbook “script” to insert his own interpretation, or to make explicit what values were important. Unlike Mr. Richardson, he did not develop his own class activities. “The history curriculum is neutral,” claimed Mr. Mzamane, “they just write what happened.”

However, there were three important differences in the way that Mr. Mzamane taught which hinted at his attitudes towards the past. The first was that he always referred to the apartheid government as the “White government”, and perpetrators of apartheid as “White people”. In this regard there was a clear alignment of race and power, and a racialized responsibility for the abuses of apartheid. This was very different to Mr. Cilliers who never spoke about the accountability of White people, but rather the “government”. Strikingly, Mr. Mzamane attributed apartheid abuses to the individual attitudes and moral failings of White people, rather than simply their elected representatives:

“We don’t have to discriminate because we share the same ancestor. If you discriminate another, you discriminate your brother. But it’s difficult for White people to accept a common ancestor. This is why they created apartheid.”

“White people believed that Black people were just going to school to read and write so they could communicate with White people.”

The double standards and injustice of apartheid was emphasized in teaching, and in particular the ways in which Black people – as opposed to White people – were punished:

T: Those two laws emphasized that an Indian should marry an Indian, White to White. What happened to those who got married but were from different racial groups?

S: White people were not getting any punishment, but Black people got arrested.

T: You are right, they broke the law but only Blacks were punished. Was it fair?

SS: No

In regard to race there was furthermore a clear distinction made between the Black people who were indigenous to Africa – i.e. “Africans” – and the White people who were “foreigners”. When speaking about the Pass Laws for example, Mr. Mzamane explained:

“It is very ironic that the very first foreigners were treating indigenous people as foreigners. Because White people were the first foreigners, they were not from here.”

Once again the cruelty of White people is foregrounded, and magnified by the accusation that “they were not from here”.

Second, Mr. Mzamane spoke frequently and in great detail about the physical brutality that took place under apartheid. He emphasized how disproportionate this brutality was, describing what would happen to Black people at the hands of White people if they peacefully broke apartheid laws; “Any police could beat up any African on the street.” Similarly, Mr. Mzamane described how police would determine a person’s race. Not only would they check hair texture – as described in the textbook – but the police

would also burn Black and Coloured people with cigarettes to see which language they used when they screamed in pain.

Mr. Mzamane also did not shy away from his own experiences of violence. “I remember it happened again during the 1980s,” he recalled, “when White shops were boycotted” and Black people who were caught shopping there “would be beaten up”. Similarly, Mr. Mzamane spoke about his own schooling experiences under Bantu education where corporal punishment was encouraged:

“I didn’t go to athletics because I wanted to do homework. He beat us up. Each 25 lashes. My hand was numb. I couldn’t feel my hand. It was swollen. The way he beat us up. Sometimes he would use a sjambok¹³. He would say you must stand and beat you at the back. If you were a boy, he would call a girl and instruct that girl to stand in front of you, so you don’t move.”

These violent examples focused not on structural injustices, or on emotional trauma, but rather the lived experience of physical vulnerability, pain, and powerlessness. The description of the violence was detailed – his hand was “numb” and “swollen” – and thus invited the students into a vicarious experience of apartheid brutality.

Lastly, as highlighted in the opening vignette, Mr. Mzamane often evoked the idea of revenge for apartheid, or at least a racialized power-reversal. He made clear that he did not think that multiculturalism was working. Rather, the hegemony of English language and culture in South Africa disadvantaged Black people. In these thought experiments, students would be asked to imagine what would happen if apartheid laws were applied to White people, or if White people were forced to return to Europe. There was an element of glee in these discussions, which were encouraged by a teacher who gave the students space to imagine a powerful Black South Africa.

¹³ A heavy leather whip, symbolic of police violence under apartheid.

Mr. Mzamane resisted interviews with me until the very end of the year. When these interviews were finally scheduled they lasted for many hours, and offered some relief to the mistrust that had grown between us. We both spoke frankly about our racial positionings, and how they influenced our reactions to South African history education. I learned much about his life outside of Thokozani High which I wish I had understood earlier in the fieldwork.

The racialized anger that I had been sensitive to in the classroom was made very apparent during these interviews. At first the conversation centered on what the students thought about the past. According to Mr. Mzamane, students would say, “hey, I wish they could come back so we could do exactly what they did to our forefathers”, or “if they kill Black people then we will kill them as well”. Yet as the interviews progressed it was clear that his anger was also raw. As he summarized, “It’s difficult to forgive someone who does something to you intentionally.”

Revisiting these interviews, I recognize how much effort I expended trying to position myself as a “good White”. Yet the relationship never developed the trust I felt it required to share my research findings with Mr. Mzamane. Perhaps this in itself is a legacy of apartheid.

Personal histories of students

Thandiwe

“Each and every topic that we are studying about in history, I’m in love with it”, gushes Thandiwe; “It’s not like I’m choosing that. It’s just that, OK, this one I’m understanding it – easy!”

I often start interviews with a question about the student’s family history. In most cases they tell me where their parents were born, or maybe even their grandparents. Thandiwe however is a serious historian. She takes a deep breath; “Okay,” she begins, “I’ll tell you what I know.”

For the next twenty-one minutes she details how she came to exist, starting with the family's clan heritage. "On the side of my mother, they are Shube's, a mix of Sotho and Xhosa. On the side of my father, they are also a mix of Ndebele's and those things." We then move to discuss life for her great-great grandparents; multiple wives, and a fight in the extended family which led to the building of a new homestead closer to an urban area. Her grandmother's forced marriage – "you know us Africans!" – into a family that kidnapped her while she was fetching water. Her own mother's escape from an upbringing in which a girl must "fix the house with the popo from the cow, and do the housework, and take the grass from the forest". A subsequent move to Cape Town in the 1980s where a rumor started that she was pregnant. A lost matriculation certificate, which meant her mother worked first as a cleaner, then in a bakery, and finally at 7-Eleven.

We have spanned over one hundred years of South African family history, never once mentioning apartheid, never once mentioning White people. It is humbling to reflect on how the focus of this research might have been different if Thandiwe had designed it.

Thandiwe was without doubt the most talented and hardworking of Mr. Mzamane's Grade 9 history students. She would regularly go to the public library near the school to read books about the Second World War, and would explain to the teacher, "Meneer¹⁴, some books are telling the story better than our books as students." While she did not credit her interest in history to her father, he was a great support to her, often relating the history she was learning at school to episodes from his own life.

Indeed, apartheid was the aspect of the history curriculum that Thandiwe deemed most relevant to her life, precisely because of her father's experiences. "Do you remember Mr. Mzamane telling us that he

¹⁴ An Afrikaans term meaning "Sir".

was beaten up...?” she once asked; “My father also got that”. She described how her father tried to run from police on an occasion when he forgot his *dompas*¹⁵, and went to prison for a week:

“And he was like, ‘my child, life in prison, it’s not easy at all. You must stand up. You can’t act like you are the boss there because you will arrive there, there are already bosses inside. Because you are new. You are going to be their slaves. If they want you to fix their bed, you are the one who is going to do it. And in jail, people are killing each other. And there is no-one who is caring for you.’”

The full extent of the trauma that Thandiwe’s father experienced under apartheid was not shared with his daughter. “Oh if I can tell you my stories, my child,” he once said to her, “you will stop crying water with salt, you will cry blood.” Yet this did not deter her interest. “Maybe it’s really hurting”, she explained, “but I am that person who wants to know more.”

Dumisa

“You cry, yes”, responds Dumisa immediately, when I ask him if learning about apartheid ever makes him angry. Such an emotional response from this quiet young man takes me aback. Yet when I probe the implications of this anger he dismisses the question; “It’s in the past, so it’s history. Let’s just put it aside and go to the future.”

For Dumisa, our future needs to be jobs. He wants to create a business to employ unemployed Black people – maybe even unemployed White people if there are any in the future. He thinks personal responsibility is important. He recognizes the failings of the public school system but is grateful for the education it has given him. I, however, want to talk about emotion.

¹⁵ A pass book that Black South Africans were required to carry under apartheid.

I phrase the question in terms of Mr. Mzamane; Whether it is desirable to have a teacher who expresses anger.

“I’m not judging him for being mad,” replies Dumisa defensively; “We are all mad.”

Dumisa was a quiet and thoughtful student, full of ideas that I initially found conflicting. Certainly he was angry at what White people had done during apartheid. In particular he was angry on behalf of his mother, who had wanted to be a nurse but instead became a domestic worker, who had wanted to travel the world but instead lived in a shack.

Yet he also accepted the racialized power structures of his country. He didn’t think that racism was a problem for example, because the White family who employed his mother treated him well. He wished for a White president, so that we could “see the change in South Africa that a White person can do”. He thought that colonialism was “a good thing”, because “if British people had not invaded our country we will be still hunting for animals in the forest”. He thought that Black people should take back the land but was worried that “suddenly everyone will build shacks around”.

Over the course of the year however, I began to see how Dumisa used gratitude and ambition to navigate the tension between Black anger and the perceived need for White dominance. When I pushed the students to articulate the ways in which apartheid might have affected them, Dumisa concluded with gratitude for his life, choosing to focus on what poverty has offered:

“But I won’t say it affected [my life] because I am happy like this. Like, public schools have taught me many things. Like it taught me not to look at people down, and things. If you’re poor, like I won’t say, ‘you’re poor, you’re nothing.’ Because I know how it is to be poor. So I’m happy that way. I’m so happy now.”

Implications for the study

The ethnographic descriptions offered in Part One provide a context for analysis and discussion on the ways in which historical legacies were constructed in the classroom. Thokozani High had several unusual characteristics which influenced the style of engagement within history lessons.

The most obvious characteristic was that relatively little history was taught. This was due to teacher absenteeism, the amount of time in the classroom which was spent on discipline and management, and a lack of classroom resources. As a result, classroom discussions were virtually non-existent, and history was regarded as a series of events, rather than a personal or analytical engagement with the past.

Mr. Mzamane's class was also the only racially homogenous class in the sample. Both the teacher and all the students identified as Black. Unlike in Mr. Cillers' or Mr. Richardson's classes, a more homogenous world-view was assumed. Sweeping statements about "Black people" and "White people" were made. This might have been less possible if White students were present in the class, or if the teacher was viewed by his students as racially "other". Furthermore, as the only Black teacher in my sample, Mr. Mzamane was likely to have suffered the greatest discrimination under apartheid.

Lastly, the relative poverty of the students meant that they rarely interacted with people of a different race. They lived in almost entirely Black communities. Their main interactions with White people were characterized by power hierarchies; their parent's employer for example, or their principal. Only Zintle knew White people as equals, through her membership of a predominantly White church.

While these characteristics do not make a certain construction of historical legacies inevitable, they may help to frame the analysis below.

Part Two

In Part Two I describe the ways in which historical legacies were constructed in the classroom, and in doing so I seek to understand how students learned to think about the relationship between past and present. As described in Chapter 4, I unpack this engagement with legacies of the past first by exploring the way that Luthando Mzamane spoke about the relationship between the past and the present, and then by looking at how the students spoke about the relationship between the past and the present.

In regard to the way history was taught, I focus on Mr. Mzamane's emphasis on history as being either continuous or discontinuous with the present, as well as to what extent past circumstances can be causally linked to present circumstances. In regard to how legacies of apartheid are understood I focus on how Thokozani High students explain contemporary social issues, and how the personal histories of the students as well as their history classes relate to their use of the past. I do not assume that the way historical legacies are constructed by the students is a direct result of the way they are taught by Mr. Mzamane. Rather, I seek to explore the interactions in the classroom, and the ways in which ideas about the past and the present are expressed and mediated by both the teacher and the students.

How historical legacies are constructed by the teacher

Luthando Mzamane rarely made direct comments about the relationship between past and present, however there were clear instances in his teaching where anger at racial injustice was foregrounded. This anger was not systematically linked to aspects of the history curriculum. Rather it was evoked through a discourse which presented fixed racialized identities (Black and White) in dialogical opposition, and which ascribed fixed character traits to these identities. The timeless and universal nature of these racialized identities, in constant conflict with one another, shaped the way in which the past and present were understood to relate.

In this section I describe how Mr. Mzamane spoke about this relationship between past and present in reference to ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’, before then turning to look at how relationships of causality were addressed. In particular, I make a distinction between what I observed Mr. Mzamane say to his Grade 9 class, and what he said to me during our private interviews.

Continuity and discontinuity

Mr. Mzamane described the present as being both continuous and discontinuous with the past. While the apartheid laws had been abolished, the discriminatory attitudes and brutality that had characterized – and indeed created – apartheid were still very present. However a third approach was also introduced; that of a primordial past and state of existence. In particular, the antagonistic relationship between Black and White people was presented as timeless and therefore inevitable; “This color always separates us. We can say we are one but it separates us, but we are trying.” Actions in the present could resist or restore balance to this foundational antagonism, but would not remove it.

In regard to apartheid laws, Mr. Mzamane celebrated the various ways in which South Africa was different now that apartheid had ended. For example, he thanked “Tata Mandela” for outlawing the corporal punishment in schools that had led many Black people to forego education. He also took pleasure in his students’ incredulity that mixed-race couples were not allowed to have sexual relationships under apartheid, or that teachers often had to teach two different grades in one classroom. The horror that such a past could exist helped to distance it from the present.

Racial antagonisms however, had not changed. For example, White peoples’ attitudes to Black people were described as continuous with their attitudes under apartheid. “There are people who believe that Africans should live separately from Whites”, Mr. Mzamane explained to his class, just as he had explained that “It’s difficult for White people to accept a common ancestor.” These attitudes were

described as unchanging facts; as true then as now. The only difference was that laws no longer supported these attitudes.

In interviews with Mr. Mzamane, White peoples' continued dominance was also foregrounded:

“They dominated and now they’re still dominating... We need to forgive and forget but if White people are still doing the same then it’s difficult to forgive and forget.”

How exactly White people were “dominating” was rarely articulated, although it implied an interpersonal rather than legal dominance; one in which White people did not feel like they needed to respect Black people. This interpretation is supported by the opening vignette, in which Mr. Mzamane is not focusing on a structural reversal of apartheid, where White people are forced to give back the resources that they stole. Rather, a reversal in which White people are humiliated and abused just as Black people were. The issue is one of racial dignity, and its continual undermining.

The continuity of racialized brutality was also mentioned by Mr. Mzamane during our interviews. He cited numerous recent examples; a Black farm laborer who was buried alive by White farmers, or a Black petrol attendant who was attacked by White boys. Once again, he did not describe the structural injustice that Stamford High students articulated, or the racist language that concerned Southgate High. Mr. Mzamane foregrounded physical violations; the ways in which he perceived Black peoples' bodies to be harmed both under apartheid and today.

According to Mr. Mzamane, racial dignity and territory were also linked. Territory and who it belonged to was presented by Mr. Mzamane as being a primordial struggle of Black people trying to gain respect from the White “foreigners” who occupied it:

“Some White people are not willing to live alongside us. My question to those people: Why are they here if they don’t want to live with Africans? Because this is African land. They must go back to the land of their forefathers. They shouldn’t come here to bother themselves and to

bother us. If they don't want to live with us in our space then it means that they are not happy, because we are here and there is nowhere we can go to. They cannot live without us, because in terms of labor. It doesn't make sense why they don't want to live with us. Or maybe they always want to have the upper hand. They want to live with us, but we mustn't think that we are equal. This is what we don't like."

This statement from an interview implies that White people are still coming to African land, just as they had done under colonial rule; that according to Mr. Mzamane there is a continuity of immigration from Europe to South Africa, and that White immigrants can easily return. Immigration is described not only as continuous, but also timeless; as though the generations that have passed since many White families first arrived in South Africa would not influence their identities, or their ability to "go back to the land of their forefathers". It is furthermore timeless in the assertion that the territory is "African land" and is "ours". This ancestral and racialized claim blurs the distinction between the past and present, evoking a discourse that is not concerned with constructed or politicized identities that change across time.

Indeed, Mr. Mzamane encouraged his students to "feel sorry for White people" living in South Africa, since "they don't have roots". In this regard he asks that "we should treat them as Africans", not because they are Africans but rather because they are pitiable. This again evokes a sense in which racial identities are inexorably tied to territory, unchanged by historical movements. "There is nowhere we [Black people] can go," claims Mr. Mzamane, since the African territory has always been ours.

The combined effect of the way in which Mr. Mzamane spoke about history as being continuous or discontinuous with the present over the course of the year was to position the apartheid laws as something which we had defeated, and which had therefore discontinued. The racial antagonisms, however, had always existed and were unlikely to change. These antagonisms were without exception spoken about in the present tense. They were furthermore presented as the fault and responsibility of White people. Black people were prepared to "forgive and forget", once White people stopped treating them as inferior.

Unlike other teachers, Mr. Mzamane frequently referred to the pre-1994 government as the “White government”, foregrounding the racialization of the state. In 1994 however, “White” and “government” were decoupled. The “government” changed; it was no longer legal to discriminate on the basis of race. However, “White” had not changed. The construction of a dialogical opposition between White people and Black people would mean that the quest for racial dominance would continue.

Causal relationships between past and present

Mr. Mzamane implied two approaches to thinking about the causal relationships between the past and the present. In the first approach there was a straightforward communication that the way we live today is because of the division that apartheid created. “The impact of apartheid is still there,” he told me during an interview; “apartheid divided us. We still live that way.” Similarly he described how he would ask students why no White people lived in their neighborhoods. “Don’t rush them, give them time to think,” he explained; “It’s a question I leave pending”.

However the second approach explained the divisions of both the past and the present as having a common cause; primordial racial antagonisms. Mr. Mzamane constructed racial antagonisms as the cause of historical events such as slavery, colonialism, and apartheid: “It’s difficult for White people to accept a common ancestor. This is *why* they created apartheid.” Equally, contemporary Black discrimination and poverty were not caused only by past events, but is also caused by contemporary and universal racial antagonisms. As Mr. Mzamane explained, “Skin color always draws a line between human beings. We try to make the line thinner but it’s always there.” This was therefore not a causal historical legacy which used the past to explain the present.

For example, in an interview he explained a conversation that he had with his students:

“Given what you know about White people and what they did when they came here, what do you think about them now? And students say ‘yes, they should go back. Because we are poor today

because of what happened'. Even today they are still in control of the little resources we have. Why do you think they are still in control? 'Maybe because Africans don't know how to process those minerals'. Maybe our leaders get money from Europe, so they don't think about teaching Africans how to process them.'

At first glance this conversation looks like Mr. Mzamane is constructing a causal relationship between the past and present. The White people came and “we are poor today because of what happened”. However, a second deeper message is that “even today”, when apartheid is over and White people no longer have control, “they are still in control”. And according to Mr. Mzamane they are still in control because Black leaders – in the pockets of Europeans – benefit by keeping Africans uneducated.

Mr. Mzamane draws attention to the ways in which contemporary White people keep contemporary Black people in poverty; we do not need to look only at the past to explain Black poverty. Black people are not poor today only because of legacies of past exploitation. Black people are also poor today because the exploitation of Africans is still happening today. If we want to understand why Black people are poor, he argues, we can look at the contemporary decisions which White people take that make Black people poor.

Mr. Mzamane did not think that overcoming poverty was about reversing the wrongs of the past. Rather he thought it was about addressing contemporary wrongs. And the way to address contemporary wrongs – according to the lessons of history – was for Black people to be educated.

For example, Mr. Mzamane explained that “[Bantu education] was planned by the White government so there would be no progress in Black schools.” In this regard, he thought that it worked; “That’s why older people are not educated”. However, it had not completely worked, because some Black people did manage to receive a good education. “I think White people were clever and they were not clever,” explained Mr. Mzamane to his students; “They should not have allowed Black people to go to school at all.” The small amount of education that Black people had received, particularly in missionary schools

where “there were White teachers... which was better than Bantu education,” had created brilliant Black intellectuals and politicians. “The leaders we have now are a product of that education”, argued Mr. Mzamane, “They attended university where there was poor education but it helped them. That’s why they were able to challenge the government.”

Mr. Mzamane constructed Bantu education as the reason “why older people are not educated”. However, according to Mr. Mzamane it was not the only reason why young people were not educated. The education problems of today Mr. Mzamane once again attributed to the injustices of today. “Schools suffer from a lack of resources,” he explained, “capitalism causes an economic gap”, and “the government is failing us”. It was not necessary to look at the injustices of the past to explain the poverty of Black people, when the injustices of the present were still so severe. The education quality of Black children had been poor in the past, but it was also poor today. Most importantly however, it was not only poor today *because* it was poor in the past. Rather, Mr. Mzamane argued that it was also poor today because contemporary decisions kept it poor.

This was a powerful distinction when it came to attributing responsibility for contemporary injustice. Mr. Richardson’s teaching, for example, constructed structural legacies of apartheid which kept Black people poor. Yet it was difficult to ascribe blame to this structure; it largely operated without individual agency. Mr. Cilliers did teach about racism, however racism was thought to hurt people’s feelings rather than their livelihoods. Mr. Mzamane however, attributed accountability to “the government”, and “our leaders” who “get money from Europe”. He argued that contemporary oppression was not an inevitability given South Africa’s history; “it has to do with a person’s mind.”

Mr. Mzamane’s response to this oppression was to encourage his students to take ownership over their own education. The message he wanted to give his students was “It’s up to you to change the situation or leave it as it is. If you want to change it, you need to go to school. If this country changes it will change by you.” In this regard he drew parallels between Tata Mbeki, Tata Mandela, and Tata Mugabe,

who became educated and then transformed their countries. This was reflected in a school culture which avoided speaking about student poverty, and a teaching style that put a strong emphasis on students' responsibility. "If you do not work you will fail," Mr. Mzamane would often say; "I have done everything to try to refresh your memory."

Yet still I observed minimal engagement in the classroom in regard to how racialized poverty existed. What exactly did Mr. Mzamane understand to be the mechanisms by which White people kept Black people poor? According to Mr. Mzamane, this was not a question that the students were very focused on. "In their minds," he explained, "White people are rich and some Black people are poor, but they don't know exactly why. They grow up in that situation; Blacks must work for Whites." The fact that current race relations were so normalized meant that unlike in Stamford High they did not need to be interrogated.

How historical legacies are constructed by the students

The students that I interviewed from Thokozani High were the least advantaged in my sample. All five of the students, with the exception of Zintle, lived in townships. To a large extent they felt privileged to attend Thokozani High. Choosing a school in the Southern suburbs represented effort and sacrifice on behalf of their parents. It encouraged ambitions for the future which far exceeded the achievements of the older generation. Most importantly however, it was safe.

Studying apartheid was a personal experience for the Thokozani High students. They related what they learned not only to their society, but also to family history, and the experience of their parents. In this section I try to untangle some of the different ways in which students constructed connections between the history they were learning and the contemporary social issues they were experiencing. I look first at how they construct the relationship between past and present, before then focusing on the specific issue of racialized poverty.

The relationship between past and present

An important feature of studying apartheid for all the students was the connection it gave them to the older generation. “Every Black parent, their grandparents have experienced it before. So, it’s what links them to history,” explained Anathi. “I learnt to understand where my grandmother or my grandfather came from,” agreed Dumisa, and to understand why “they treat us in different ways than my mother treats me.” Unlike his mother who did not struggle under apartheid, his grandmother would often say to Dumisa that he was ungrateful for the things he has “because in the old days they didn’t have that much.”

Khwezi similarly used history lessons to help contextualize his grandmother’s life:

“My grandmother, when she was with us, she told us stories about apartheid days. She didn’t have work at that time, but she used to work for a White person. She didn’t tell me much. She told my mother all, but she doesn’t want to tell me that story. I think because it hurt them very much, because they were depending on White people.”

The pain of family members – also described by Thandiwe in Part One – found resonance with the descriptions of Mr. Mzamane’s life under apartheid. History lessons helped shed light on dark times that their parents and grandparents wouldn’t communicate. It therefore helped to put their lives in context and build bridges between past and present generations. Thandiwe for example, felt that she needed to learn about apartheid for the sake of future generations; “for us to tell our children that ‘okay, there was this, and this, and this, but you didn’t experience it.’”

Yet the history was also personally emotive, and at times difficult to learn. Khwezi, for example, explained the difficulty “to know that your great grandfathers were treated like trash”, while Zintle explained,

“I used to get very angry because yes, my great grandfather used to tell me stories about that... I think people do need to know that, their history, but it’s also actually a bit confusing because it brings back feelings of anger.”

Tempering the anger was a necessary balancing act between needing to know, but not being overwhelmed. The students dealt with this balance in different ways. Zintle for example drew strongly on her Christian faith; the idea both of original sin and forgiveness. “As time went by,” she reflected, “I just realized that humans are just bad people by nature.” Dumisa wanted to “just put it aside”, while Anathi took the moral high ground; “avenging yourself makes you just like the person you are taking vengeance with.”

The way that race was spoken about in their history classes also reflected the ways in which the students constructed racial identities. The categories of “White” and “Black” were stereotyped into fixed categories of attitudes and behaviors. “What I’ve learnt is that people have differences; they have different opinions, different everything,” explained Anathi. For example, “I think White people are friendly, more than Black people”, claimed Dumisa, “because Black people are robbing other Black people. Black people are killing other Black people. I’ve never seen a White man kill a White man before.” Zintle concurred; “White people are nice people.”

Yet there was an assumption that White people “want to bring back apartheid.” This was considered a risk when discussing whether South Africa would benefit from a White president. Khwezi explained:

“I do agree and disagree about having a White president. Why I disagree, it’s because of I think if it happens, we get a White president, in my mind I think that apartheid will be back because as now, we are not treating White people good. We keep on telling them that they must go away, and we want our land back. Yes, then it happens that we choose the votes of the White president becomes higher than the Black, and then we will be ruled by the White person. Then I think they are going to be the one who will chase us away, or they will bring back apartheid here.”

Zintle agreed with Khwezi:

“I also agree. I think even if the president would maybe be like not have that, oh, you’re trying to chase us away now. Now I’m the president, I’m going to chase you away. I think that even if you didn’t feel that way, there will be some White people who will influence him.”

Similar to Mr. Mzamane, racial groups were constructed as having diametrically opposed interests, and as perpetually trying to dominate one another. When there is a Black president then White people are told to leave South Africa, and when there is a White president Black people are chased away. There was no sense in which these identities or their conflicts were historically constructed and therefore changeable. Rather the only way to manage this primordial antagonism was to maintain a balance of power. This was entirely different to the Southgate High students who saw race as being entirely constructed and therefore not worth discussing; merely a “pigment”.

Yet despite this racial antagonism described by the Thokozani students, Black people needed White people. This was explained by the fact that “some Black people are not educated to have smart jobs and money”. Yet Black incompetence – due to a lack of education – was not explicitly attributed to the apartheid past, or as something that was likely to change in the future:

“I think they must stay in South Africa so we can have a better future because most of businesses in South Africa are owned by White people. So we will suffer.”

“It will be very difficult for us because some inventions that are made, if they are, or there is a Black person, it will be one or two. Otherwise, the rest are White people. So yes, South Africa won’t develop too much. South Africans are not well educated, and yes, White people are helping because they are helping South Africa to develop better.”

I was surprised that the students didn't see Black people relinquishing their reliance on White people as South Africa gained temporal distance from apartheid. For example, when we discussed the education quality of Thokozani High, Thandiwe explained:

"It's a good school because it's not like our teachers are only Black people. Okay, yes, we do have some secondary [trainee] teachers who are White people, and then I think it will end up having White teachers. Then because you see Xhosa teachers are getting old now. So they will move away, yes. I think it will also develop a lot. Then as we know that Whites are more educated than Black people. Even though there are those Blacks who are also educated, but yes."

Not only was Thokozani High a "good school" because it has some White trainee teachers, but it was likely to "develop a lot" because the Xhosa teachers would retire and be replaced by more White teachers. Interestingly, the students did not articulate a belief that Black people were likely to become more educated, or that the school would develop due to increasingly educated new Black teachers. Like the economy, the only way to improve education was to recruit White people.

This fear that South Africa could not survive without the skills of White people also influenced how the students thought about the issue of land redistribution. Redistributing land from White ownership to Black ownership had been a key point of policy debate in South Africa. The students in the focus group constructed this issue as a legacy of historical injustices. As Zintle explained, "that also drives other people crazy because they're like, 'no, this is our land'". She continues to say;

"I actually agree, kind of agree with Black people getting their land back... I think that it originally belongs to the Black people because they were forced. If the White people bought the land I would be fine with that. I would be like, 'no guys, this is unfair because they bought it fair and square,' but if they took it by force then I think Black people should get it back."

Furthermore, there was a belief that the taking of “our land” was one of the reasons why White people had more money than Black people. Thandiwe, for example, constructed the superior education of White people as a legacy of historic land removals, and she constructs a sophisticated mechanism which connects this antecedent and outcome:

“I’ll say why White kids are more educated than Black kids. It’s because Black people have small land, and if you can compare the land of Blacks and White, the larger one, it’s for White people. And that land was taken from Black people. And now, if a White man, he’ll think of, ‘okay, let me make a farm behind this house.’ And then he plants some plants and do some flower, and then, maybe he is working on the other side, and he will have this business of flowers. And then they will have much more money in their family. And even long time ago, he had money that he was left by his parents then they... so yes. And then that thing goes on and goes on. Because while their kids are still in universities they will have money in their banks for further studies. So that’s why. Because they have a lot of money for them to go on with their studies.”

Yet the constructions of these legacies of historic injustices did not lead the students to think that the injustices should be reversed. Instead, the students were pragmatic about what land redistribution might mean. Dumisa for example asked, “who must get the land?” and worried that “if they give it to the government, Black people will be like, ‘oh, shacks’... everyone will build shacks around.” Zintle, after a conversation with her sister, agreed with Dumisa:

“I think it will actually also affect our country very badly. Because I don’t think Black people, since they weren’t educated long ago, I don’t think they’ll be able to keep up with the standard that White people were able to keep up with this. I was asking my sister long ago, ‘What do you think would happen?’ I was asking her that, ‘Sissie, would you like Black people to get their land back?’ She was like, ‘I would like that, but I don’t actually think it would be good,’ because

yes, the same that I said, Black people wouldn't be able to keep up. Because yes, they're just not educated to that, not now. Obviously not now because all that is gone."

This statement is interesting, because according to Zintle's sister, legacies of apartheid are both the reason why there should be land redistribution, and also why there shouldn't be land redistribution. Because Black people were not educated, it would no longer be prudent for them to own the land that was stolen from them. They were therefore trapped in an uneasy truce with White people.

Understanding contemporary issues: Racialized poverty

Adopting an approach similar to Duquette (Duquette, 2015) I sought to understand how the students in the focus groups explained contemporary issues facing their society, and whether or not history was used as one of the explanatory factors. The issues that were selected to speak about arose naturally from my conversations with the students, in an attempt to ensure their relevance to the students' lives. Racialized poverty was an issue that the students at Thokozani High were particularly interested in. It sparked lively and contentious debate. I have thus chosen this contemporary issue as a case study, to explore the ways in which students interpret their society.

The notion of fixed racial identities with corresponding attitudes and behaviors was important when understanding how the students constructed explanations for contemporary poverty. Indeed, there was a tension between whether Black poverty was seen as a result of the disposition of Black people, or whether it should be understood as a legacy of apartheid.

Thandiwe, for example, argued strongly and at length that Black people were responsible for their own poverty;

"I won't blame White people for Black people that are not working. Because White people, what I've observed is that up to school, like after matric, they don't waste their time by going to universities and colleges. They decide to open their businesses and yes. But Black people want..."

Most of them, after finishing matric, and then they send their certificates to colleges, and they will wait, and they will take a gap year. After that gap year, the person will say that, okay, I'm going to school next year. After that next year, it will be another next year. And then years are going, and then: Yes, that person will never be employed because he or she doesn't try for themselves. They want to like, to be confirmed; they don't try something while they are waiting for the confirmations."

"But if you can look from the White people's side, you see when parents are planning to have a baby, they will invest that money for that baby before he or she is born. But when it comes to Black people, they will have unprotected sex while they know the consequences of that. And they will blame White people. Like, they want to compare themselves to White people, not knowing what do White people do."

Dumisa similarly attributed poverty to a deficiency in the attitudes of Black people:

"You live your life, so you don't for other person. So you're the one who must take the steps and responsibility. You must be responsible for yourself. Don't let someone else to tell you want to do with your life. So then, if their parents will say "I'm not educated: The reason why I let you to go to school is because I want you to be educated, I don't want you to be like me." And they will have that thing in their minds that, 'oh, my mother is not educated and I don't see the reason why must I be educated'. They don't have that thing of 'I need to change my home situation'. There are few who have that.

"Because if you can look, the average people who are smoking drugs, it's Black people, and they don't see that this thing is destroying their future. Because if my brother is smoking drugs and I see where he ends, why must I take that path? I know the consequences of doing that thing, you see? Then they drop out of school after doing that, and now they want to blame White people

for not making jobs for them, or White people are more educated, and they want to go now to the history. They want back their land, just because they messed up with their lives.”

In both these examples, the students repeat that White people cannot be held accountable for the decisions of Black people. They therefore refute Mr. Mzamane’s position that Black people are victims of the racist decisions of White people. There is furthermore a belief that what “White people do” is superior to what Black people do. However neither Thandiwe nor Dumisa interrogate why this might be the case; is this due to legacies of apartheid, or is there something inherently deficient in Black people? Like Mr. Mzamane however, they do see education and personal initiative to be routes out of poverty.

This strong position on individual responsibility surprised me. It was very different to that articulated by the Stamford High students, who spoke about the structural barriers to wealth and success. Yet when I asked the Thokozani High students whether “apartheid has any responsibility for the fact that many Black people now don’t have jobs”, they were adamant that it did. “So you think it’s both Black peoples’ fault, but also, it’s apartheid’s fault?” I probed. “Yes”, they unanimously replied. The distinction between structure and agency was therefore blurred. Anathi, for example, spoke about the effect apartheid had on Black people’s sense of ambition and self-esteem;

“Yes, it still affects them because they have that, they don’t want to stand on their own. They always want to work for people. Hence that was happening before. They think, they don’t want to stand on their own, like build their own businesses. Hence you find there are less non-White people who own businesses and who are outgoing, who are there. Other people just prefer working for others. They don’t think of themselves succeeding like others. They just think, this kind of success is not for me.”

Dumisa similarly articulated the relationship between wealth and criminal activity;

“Because White people are more richer than Black people, so some White people educate their sons and daughters to top schools and stuff. And Black people usually don’t have that much money, so they go to public schools where they don’t have to pay school fees and things. So, the education there, I wouldn’t say is not good, but it’s not like White peoples’ education. So, people are educated in a way that their grades are going down. So, children look at their grades and think, ‘man, I’m not doing good at school. Why must I keep on learning?’ And they end up doing gangsters and robbing people.”

In doing so he connected one’s environment and resources with one’s personal decision-making. Khwezi confirmed Dumisa’s description with the following story;

“In Site C¹⁶ there is a boy, his parents were very poor, they were unemployed that time. So, he left school and then started to get drugs and then he was a gangster. Now he’s in jail because of the situation at his home. He wanted to feed his little sister and he wanted to finish school.”

Khwezi was the student who most often constructed legacies of the past to explain contemporary poverty. He spoke both about the contemporary racist attitudes that created poverty yet which come from apartheid, as well as the structural reasons why families cannot escape poverty. Khwezi explained:

“I think apartheid is still alive... the average people who are unemployed, they are Black people... It helps us to understand because I think White people don’t treat Black people the same way they treat each other. Like they prefer any Whites above Black people.”

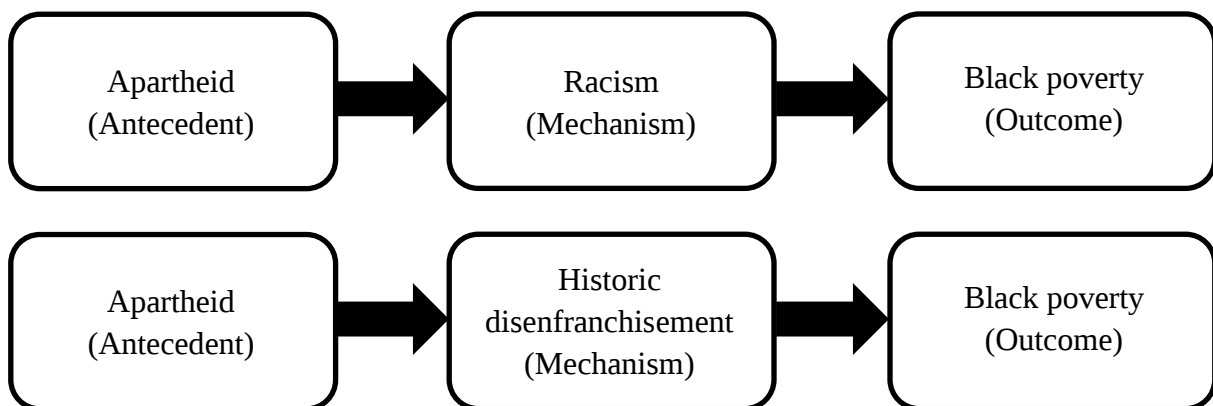
The reason Black people are unemployed is because White people do not want to hire Black people. Later he explains:

¹⁶ A neighborhood in the township of Khayelitsha where Khwezi lives.

“I was going to say that Black people, they are also responsible for their unemployment and things. Because they are not using what they have to be like White people. But they don’t stand a chance because White people have everything. They have money, so they can afford everything. For example, if a White person wants, like their child is not good in books, they can afford to take him and study technology. But then a Black child if he is not good in books then his parents will take him to college, or it’s possible that they could become gangsters and end up in jail. It shows you that White people have money more than Black people, so they can afford anything in the world.”

What Khwezi articulates is his understanding that in order to be like White people, one needs to have the resources of White people. While he does not directly attribute Black poverty to historical reasons, he does construct mechanisms by which poverty perpetuates itself over generations. Black poverty could not therefore be attributed only to Black incompetence.

Diagram 3: Khwezi and Dumisa’s dual explanation of Black poverty



Both Khwezi and Dumisa felt comfortable constructing explanations for their own poverty with regard to these structural factors. When I asked whether their lives would be different if it were not for apartheid, they both readily agreed. Dumisa said for example;

“Ah, it would be different in many ways. Like I would be maybe in a private school, because my mom is very smart. She is very smart, she wanted to be a nurse... but because of money she didn’t finish school and things. So it would change in many ways. I would have more things than I have now, you see?”

Khwezi similarly explained:

“I think our lives would be different; we would be rich now. Because many lands of the people now are owned by White people, but if there had been no apartheid, then we would be rich, we would have education, we would have access to everything, we would be all over the world.”

Thandiwe however was reluctant to attribute her life circumstances to historical factors like apartheid. This surprised me, since she had eloquently constructed an explanation for how stolen land influenced contemporary wealth, and she described in the greatest detail the abuses of apartheid on her family. However she was adamant that, not only did apartheid improve the education of all South Africans through the introduction of technology developed by White people, but that – if used in the right way – apartheid could strengthen a person;

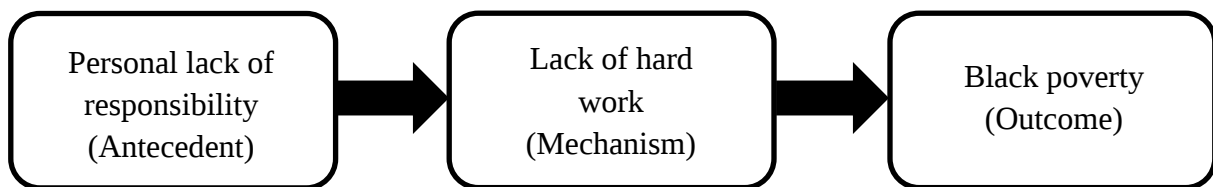
“I think in life, for you to be successful you have to... you must have a challenge, you must struggle. So I think even though it wasn’t easy at that time, but our parents today are like, even though White people didn’t treat us well, but today some of us are grateful for that treatment. Even though when we like, sometimes we get flash-backs of that pain we’ve been through, I think even though it’s not good, but then it was a good lesson in life, that not everything would or can happen easily or will happen your way.”

I wondered whether this claim of individual agency was important to Thandiwe. She was proud of what her parents had achieved through their work ethic, and she spoke with pride about how they had raised her;

“My parents, they know that as a person if you are not educated you are nothing in this world, so what they did, they sat with me down and told me that, ‘You see? This is your life. We will show you which way. We will tell you when you are taking a good and a bad way. It’s up to you if you want to follow what we are telling you to do.’”

Thandiwe then went on to reiterate, “I don’t want to blame White people for Black people that doesn’t have jobs.”

Diagram 4: Thandiwe’s explanation of Black poverty



It is important not to ascribe a false consciousness to Thandiwe. Rather, it is interesting to look at how personal circumstances might lead students to resist internalizing certain constructions of historical legacies, even when they can eloquently articulate those constructions. This is something to consider, particularly in situations of limited social mobility. To agree with Khwezi’s statement that Black people “don’t stand a chance”, or to blame White people for the lack of Black peoples’ jobs, is inherently disempowering. It moves power over one’s life either to the historical past, or to the “other”. It is in contradiction to Thandiwe’s parents who told her, “it’s up to you”.

At Stamford High, the students had a teacher who discussed and detailed how the past influenced the present in ways that maintained Black poverty. However the students at Stamford High were also socially mobile; they attended one of the top-performing schools in the country. Despite their race they did “stand a chance”. In contrast, I wondered whether at Thokozani High the admonition to work hard,

and the personal responsibility placed on the students both by their parents and teacher, was one way of reasserting agency within a structure that might otherwise feel hopeless. I revisit this point in Chapter 9.

Conclusion

The data collected from these classroom observations and focus groups provide a rich insight into the various ways in which history was used – or not used – to interpret contemporary South Africa. However unlike in Stamford High or Southgate High there was not an explicit articulation of what our approach to the past should be. Rather, the narrative was full of tensions; the need to remember the past but the desire to move away from it; anger at White people but the need for White people; the historical dangers of racial stereotyping yet the explicit frequency of racial stereotyping; regret for the past yet gratitude for where it has led us.

Mr. Mzamane for example, spoke about apartheid laws as being in the past yet facilitated a fantasy in which they could be reintroduced in reverse. He taught a history of racial antagonisms without historicizing these racial antagonisms, instead presenting them as primordial and eternal. He believed that his students did not understand why poverty was racialized in South Africa, yet did not seek to explain it. The students similarly felt that apartheid was intimately tied to the experiences of their families, yet were also the most likely to attribute personal blame to those who were poor.

These tensions reflect the difficulty of learning a history that one is also living. Of all the students in my sample, the Thokozani students had lives that were least changed by the transition to democracy. It was unsurprising then that feelings about the past were complicated and disjointed. Unlike Southgate High or Stamford High there was not a neat narrative that could explain all that was thought, felt, and experienced. The example of Thandiwe illustrates this; the belief in the influence of the past over the present, but the need to also exert agency over that present.

Chapter 8

Case Study 4: Historical Legacies at John May High School

Introduction

Three or four students at a time line up at the front of the classroom, standing awkwardly as they present the findings of their oral history projects.

“Okay guys,” rallies Mr. Lembe, trying to inject some enthusiasm into the process, “What did you learn from this project?” There is some nervous shuffling before one student steps forward, cautious yet defiant; “I learned most elderly people would rather prefer apartheid than now,” she claims.

My heart sinks a little, as I look over to Mr. Lembe. He, however, works hard to hide his disappointment; “Where did you get that from?” he enquires calmly.

“My mom,” replies the student, “she said she would rather have apartheid because there’s more crime now and it’s expensive now. She said she doesn’t care about politics; she just wants to live her life.”

I soon learn to expect this answer, as one by one students step forward to report the same findings; “All parts of apartheid wasn’t bad Sir, stuff was cheaper than now”; “He said that it was better before because if you murdered someone then you would get the death penalty”; and “He was a carpenter, and he said that apartheid didn’t really touch him.”

“Do you think what you found out,” asks Mr. Lembe thoughtfully, “do you think it makes you look at our country differently?”

“Not really,” replies a student, “because there’s wars now also, just different wars with gangs.”

Chapter Structure

This chapter addresses the question of how historical legacies are constructed in a Grade 9 history classroom at John May High School. It seeks to explore how the students in Simon Lembe's class learn to understand and explain contemporary South African social issues – such as ideas regarding law and order as described in the vignette above – and whether the history they learn is a feature in those explanations.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part One I offer thick ethnographic descriptions of John May High School, as well as ethnographic biographies of two students and their history teacher. In Part Two I concentrate on the ways in which historical legacies were constructed by the teacher and students.

Part One

School portrait

“The influence of a good teacher can never be erased. Thank you for all you do in tough circumstances,” reads the diploma ceremony program. I flick through this little pamphlet in the staffroom, scanning the lists of students' names as I try not to make eye contact with the Grade 10 teacher. She is sitting in the corner, with tears beginning to well.

“I just can't continue like this,” she sobs, as a colleague comforts her. The other teachers nod empathetically; “You have to put your own mental health first”, they say, “maybe take a break from that class.”

A young male teacher enters the staffroom. “The usual suspects?” he asks. “Junaid,” reply the teachers. The male teacher nods; “let me know if you need help with him,” he offers as he makes coffee, “don't discipline him on your own, it's not safe.”

Part consolation, part group therapy, the teachers start to share their own stories of Junaaid. “He once threw a pair of scissors at me,” a large matronly woman recounts; “I was so angry I screamed that I’d have him expelled. He told me to fuck off, so I told him to fuck off.” She looks at me, shaking her head in disbelief; “What is wrong with our children?”

John May High School is a predominantly Coloured school, located in an historically Coloured neighborhood. The fees are R3000 per year, and the school is selective, drawing mainly from feeder primary schools in the area. There are no White students or staff, however there are a few Black students. Although many Black students apply to the school, most are rejected since they live outside of the catchment areas. One Black student that I spoke to lived in the township of Khayelitsha, however she had registered her home address with her aunt who lived within John May’s catchment area.

In the 1980s John May High School was one of a number of schools in the neighborhood that was actively involved in the anti-apartheid resistance protests. The school is proud of this history. In the reception area for example, there are newspaper clippings from that time. There is also a framed painting of the school tie in the shape of a Black Power fist. On the outside wall of one of the classrooms there is a life-size mural depicting Black and Coloured people protesting, while a White policeman with a gun begins to shoot. The mural is clearly old; it is faded, scratched, and defaced.

During my first meeting with the school leadership I made the mistake of explaining that I was interested in John May High as an example of a “proud Coloured school”. I was gently corrected by the Head of History who explained that they are a Black¹⁷ school, and that Black identity is something which they promote to their students. This Black identity however was not internalized by the students, who

¹⁷ In reference to Biko’s Black Consciousness.

continued to self-identify as Coloured, and often asked if there shouldn't be a Coloured Consciousness as well.

The distinction between teachers who identified as Black, and students who identified as Coloured, seemed to represent a larger schism in the school. There was palpable mistrust between teachers and students, which resulted in an unprecedented number of disciplinary issues. Roughly five times over the course of my fieldwork I observed students being severely verbally disciplined by senior members of staff. This was usually for fighting, and at times students had bloodied faces. The teachers felt despair at the increasingly violent culture of the school, and Mr. Lembe confided that at the beginning of the year six teachers resigned citing discipline issues. "This is not the John May High School we knew", explained one.

The discipline issues were reflected in the materiality of the school environment. The school was functional but not aesthetically pleasing. Indeed, it often reminded me of a prison. Two stories of classrooms were built around central courtyards, there were bars and grates on the windows and doors, and the school bell was a long painful siren. The brick walls were painted yellow, but heavily graffitied. Cigarette butts littered the stairwells where students sat during lunch. I once noticed a condom wrapper blowing around the school grounds, and found a sanitary towel stuck to one of the walls with a penis drawn on it.

The neighborhoods that the students came from had very high instances of crime relating to gangs and drugs. Indeed, some of these neighborhoods had world record-breaking numbers of homicides. The students frequently spoke about this crime. One student, for example, brought in a newspaper clipping of a man she knew who had just been sentenced for murder. Mr. Lembe described how a sixteen-year-old student showed him a photo of a dead man who had been shot in his community. The normalization of this violence disturbed the history teacher; "He shouldn't be doing that," bemoaned Mr. Lembe, "he should be showing me photos of cars or soccer players. Even of girls in bikinis – at that age they do that.

But not normalizing violence.” According to Mr. Lembe this culture of violence traumatized the students and influenced their interpersonal interactions. The students struggled with anger management and could not communicate.

The poverty of the students was also a factor. Of the Grade 9 class I observed, only two students had a parent with a tertiary degree. The school struggled to collect school fees, and when possible would distribute food packages to needy families. One teacher described how a student in her class fainted because he had not eaten for three days.

Yet while taking into consideration the backgrounds of the students, the discipline issues were also exacerbated by the principal. According to the students, Ms. Abrahams was a “dictator” who didn’t listen to anyone. In private, other teachers agreed; the principal was unable to take criticism, and intimidated teachers against expressing their opinions. There was a lack of support for teachers who were struggling with discipline – “they are on their own” – and little effort had been made to improve the school. Teacher absenteeism had increased, for example, and teachers routinely smoked in their classrooms. Yet according to Mr. Lembe, “we’ve been allowed to get away with it.” There were no extra-murals at the school, and while Mr. Lembe had initially expected the principal to require each teacher to run an extra-mural, this request never came. There had been high hopes for Ms. Abrahams when she started, yet after only four years in the role she was preparing to resign. None of the deputy principals wanted her job.

My observations of Ms. Abrahams supported Mr. Lembe’s description. Although Mr. Lembe introduced me to Ms. Abrahams, she never greeted me or engaged me in any conversation. Around the school she appeared fragile and dazed, yet her tone with the students was aggressive and severe. School assemblies consisted entirely of berating the students for their various inadequacies. She warned the Grade 10s for example, that the only reason they progressed to the next year was because the Department of Education insisted the school pass a certain number of students. She warned students to stop celebrating each other’s birthdays too much, since these celebrations were often “excessive”. Students were criticized for

not studying hard enough, playing too many practical jokes, smoking marijuana, and using their phones. The list often felt endless, and the students disengaged when she spoke.

Yet I began to realize that Ms. Abrahams authoritarian approach was not unique. During a school exchange, when Southgate High students visited John May High, I had the opportunity to attend a day of classes. I was surprised both by the apathy and aggression with which teachers approached their work. During a math class for example, the level of aggression towards the students felt almost pathological. Students were threatened, sworn at, and called names by their teacher. Unsurprisingly, the discipline in this class collapsed. Teachers' strategies were confined to detention, suspension, and expulsion, yet the students seemed numb to these approaches.

The history teachers at the school, however, were neither apathetic nor aggressive. All three history teachers had participated in the anti-apartheid protests of the 1980s and approached their teaching as a political calling. In the absence of any wider institutional support, they tried to keep alive the memories of the protests and instill a sense of pride in their students. Indeed Mr. Lembe expressed his disappointment that Ms. Abrahams – who had also been at the school during the protests – did not try harder to develop a proud school culture around this history. “We live on the legacy of what was created,” he explained; “We are not creating a new legacy today.”

Nevertheless, the students were uninterested in the political history of the school. Indeed, I observed more xenophobia and anti-Black racism in this school than in any other. When Mr. Lembe described Cape Town's regional inequalities – mansions in historically-White Sea Point, and shacks in historically-Black Khayelitsha – the students laughed cruelly at the thought of Black people living in shacks. I observed students complaining about foreigners in their country. Mr. Lembe described taking his students to the District Six Museum where the guide explained that Coloured people had both “White” blood, and “Black” blood. The students were pleased at the thought of their “White” heritage yet disgusted at the thought of their “Black” heritage.

Mr. Lembe was frustrated by this attitude in his students. “I don’t want them to think like that,” he told me, as he recounted how his students would say that “Blacks have an attitude of entitlement, whereas we have to work for everything. They look to *their* government for everything.” Mr. Lembe felt sad when his students noticed shacks that Black people lived in “but then they mention the satellite dishes,” implying that Black people did have money. “I don’t want them to see that”, he repeated, in reference to the satellite dishes.

The lack of Coloured history in the curriculum might help to explain the defensiveness among the students, who did not want to be mistaken for “Black”. While Mr. Lembe managed to include a small amount of Coloured history, the textbook presented the resistance to apartheid as being a struggle between Black and White people only. And since both the teachers and the curriculum subsumed Coloured people into the category of “Black”, there was no space to teach them that they had not been as badly discriminated against under apartheid. The students therefore resented what they perceived to be the undue government support given to Black communities. It was both sad and ironic that given the extent to which John May High had been involved in the resistance, its students did not see themselves represented in this history.

History teacher: Simon Lembe

“This is a space where we talk about those things,” begins Mr. Lembe, as his Grade 9 class settle down but refuse to take out their books.

It’s the first class of the John May High “go slow” - a day of protest organized by the students in beautiful symmetry with the school’s protests of thirty years ago. However rather than racial justice, today’s demands are a summer uniform, more civvies days¹⁸, and a matric dance that’s not held in the school hall.

¹⁸ A day when students do not need to wear their uniform to school.

Mr. Lembe tries to engage his students. “This is what I think,” he reasons, “you don’t have to agree”. He takes the demands one by one, explaining why the school has decided against them. A new summer uniform, for example, would cost R800 and would be unaffordable to families already struggling to pay school fees. Students use civvies days as an excuse not to work. And school events held off school premises make security a problem. “The last function we had students drinking, smoking weed, gangsters coming in, a taxi pulled up,” Mr. Lembe explains; “That’s a dangerous situation!”

The students are subdued and unhappy. But Mr. Lembe is an experienced community organizer, and he speaks to their hurt; “Students feel their voices haven’t been heard. I think that’s the problem. What do you think?”

A brief silence is punctured by some off-the-cuff demands for “school fees must fall” and “teachers must wear uniforms”.

“Laptops!” calls out one student, and Mr. Lembe snaps into action. “Oh hey listen!” he rallies as he points to the ceiling and the empty bracket where the modem and projector should be; “When I have your back is when you say, ‘they put these up two years ago for Wi-Fi in the school, so that I can use my projector to show you videos.’ He then points to the floor; “Down below us there’s an outdated computer lab. We should be able to use it. I should be able to say, ‘Right Grade 9s, everyone stand up and in an orderly fashion we’re going to walk down to the computer lab to do some research about the apartheid laws for our projects.’ If you talk about that then I’m going to have your back.”

Mr. Lembe was a dynamic and enthusiastic teacher in his late 40s. His deep booming voice had been well trained through lay preaching, and he often gave the Christian prayer at school assemblies. This faith had been particularly important as he battled alcoholism. During my fieldwork he proudly celebrated ten years sober.

Mr. Lembe had an easy and familial relationship with his students. He referred to them as “my children”, and frequently teased them. “I’m always amazed by how different the students look in a short amount of time,” he would joke, “you become so ugly so quick!” When asking his class to do a task he would cajole, “do it for me because you love me”, and when a student gave a silly answer he would reply “OK, well we’ll just love you for now.” It was therefore not surprising that Mr. Lembe was a member of the Student Welfare Committee and worked closely with the Representative Learners’ Council. Unlike many other teachers, he liked his students.

The students, and other members of staff, liked him back. Mr. Lembe was a very popular teacher. “The way he interacts with us, Miss, he will always make the lessons fun,” explained Atif. Candice similarly felt that “it’s really good, he keeps you in the moment. Like, you have to listen, you have to listen!” As I walked with Mr. Lembe through the school he would be greeted warmly, and his jokes extended to his colleagues. “When are you going to marry me, Miss Davids?” he would call out as he passed a pretty young teacher in the courtyard.

Yet despite his popularity Mr. Lembe was planning to leave the school, perhaps to teach in Abu Dhabi where his teenage daughter lived with her mother. This was in part because of the culture of the school. Mr. Lembe had recently attended a school reunion where he met old friends who had become doctors and lawyers. “I don’t want to be that,” he reflected, “but just the sense of being around people like that is infectious”. In contrast, the culture at John May High didn’t motivate him;

“It influenced me. When I look at my teaching practice, I get away with it because the kids like me. But I don’t really go out of my way to make it interesting any more. So maybe change will be good.”

I also wondered whether Mr. Lembe’s status as a racial minority in the school influenced his sense of belonging. Although he had been raised in a Coloured neighborhood, his father was Black and this had actively shaped Mr. Lembe’s political consciousness. Mr. Lembe would often describe to his class how

his father would not allow him to attend cricket matches with his friends, because he didn't want his son to sit in second-class seats and internalize the status of a second class citizen. Similarly he described how his father was adamant that his children would never treat anyone else as a second class citizen; gardeners and housekeepers for example, were always to be referred to as "Sir" and "Miss". They were to be fed the same food on the same crockery as the family.

Mr. Lembe spoke very personally to his students of the humiliation that he faced under apartheid. On an annual trip to the seaside with his mother and siblings for example, they were forbidden from swimming in the sea at a Whites-only beach even though it was empty due to the rain. He recalled elderly Black neighbors whose White granddaughter came to visit from Europe. When they went to the Whites-only beach the grandparents had to keep their distance. "It wasn't dangerous, but it was humiliating," Mr. Lembe reflected.

However, Mr. Lembe would also describe to his students the acts of community cohesion and resistance that characterized the local community's response to apartheid. He recalled the funeral of Ashley Kriel, a Coloured ANC member who was killed by the security police. The government had forbidden a large funeral, however hundreds of people attended, turning it into an ANC rally. The coffin was draped in the ANC flag, which Mr. Lembe described as being "incredible" at a time when the ANC was a shady, underground organization. This political education stayed with Mr. Lembe. He was a lifelong member of the ANC and SADTU – the teacher union associated with the ANC.

In light of this political background, Mr. Lembe worked hard to energize his students. He encouraged them to take their education seriously, despite the conditions of their school and community;

"In reality, we keep ourselves back... For us, this week we have only two school days because of Eid. A student asked me if on Friday we're going to have to work today. We hold ourselves back, look at how easily we do it. Not just us. Grade 12 wrote from 9:30am – 10:30am, then there's supposed to be break, and then school, but they message parents to say come collect

me because they say school was finished. A father left work to come collect her when school hasn't finished. Yes, money is a big difference but it's not the biggest difference. The difference is up here [points to his head]. ”

He followed this example with the story of his own life; how when his father died he could not afford to go to university and so worked in a supermarket. On the weekends he studied part-time via correspondence which he paid for through his job; “In Checkers¹⁹ I had to work in packing milk and mopping floors. That’s how I became a teacher. The point is that packing milk and mopping floors got me here today. It’s not always about money.”

Perhaps because of his politics, perhaps because he looked Black, or perhaps because he referred to Black people as “we” and “our people”, Mr. Lembe was treated with a mild amount of suspicion by his students. I wondered whether the students dismissed his reflections on the past as being irrelevant to their lives as Coloured people. When Mr. Lembe said for example, that “our people still don’t have houses”, it was clear that he was referring to Black people in townships, rather than Coloured people who live in under-resourced neighborhoods, yet who do have houses. Similarly, when he spoke about being proud to be Black, and embracing natural Black hair, this was not relevant to many of the Coloured students who had naturally straight hair. Students were frequently being asked to be proud of an identity they did not ascribe to.

As portrayed in the opening vignette, many students did not subscribe to his view that apartheid was bad, and instead aligned themselves with the message from their parents; that life under apartheid was preferable to now. In expressing a preference for apartheid, the students appeared to resist what Mr. Lembe stood for, and a central tenet of his teaching. This hurt Mr. Lembe deeply. He often appeared quite flummoxed by their responses, despite claiming to have heard this opinion many times before. His

¹⁹ A popular South African supermarket.

usual response was to ask the students why they thought life was better under apartheid. However, on one occasion he pushed back;

T: Now we have a new, different set of challenges. Do you think that now is better than the past?

SS: No (shakes head).

T: Why? OK, let me flip the question. What is good about our country now?

S: Free education.

T: Yes, and let's put that in context. Under apartheid you couldn't just walk out wherever you wanted to go, you couldn't go to any school. You'd have to go to a Coloured school like John May, not a White school like Highstead. And you couldn't go to UCT²⁰, you'd have to go to UWC²¹.

I found this exchange with his students confusing and upsetting. A student for example, identifies free education as something “good about our country”, yet the education at John May High School was not free. Mr. Lembe identifies the ability to walk wherever you want, the ability to go to a White school, and the ability to go to UCT as opportunities that would not have been possible under apartheid. However, the students he is addressing already cannot walk wherever they want due to gang violence; they cannot afford to go to an historically White school and so continue to attend the school their parents attended under apartheid; and they are unlikely to attend any university – regardless of whether it is UCT or UWC. Mr. Lembe’s comment served to reinforce the students’ argument; that for them, nothing good has come from democracy.

²⁰ University of Cape Town; an historically White university.

²¹ University of the Western Cape; an historically Coloured university.

Over the course of the year I developed a close friendship with Mr. Lembe. This friendship offered the opportunity to reflect together on some of these classroom interactions. Mr. Lembe acknowledged that for many of his students, social mobility was non-existent; “The reality for daddy, nothing has changed for him. They’re still living in that two-bedroom flat in Hanover Park.” He also recognized that what he was telling the students about the progress of South Africa was different to what they were seeing at home; “That’s what they see. Sir is telling you something different at school, that it’s not that bad.”

However, when I pointed out to Mr. Lembe that the example he gave of walking wherever they like, and attending “White” schools and universities was unlikely to be relevant for his students, he became silent. “I didn’t think about that,” he finally said; “They still can’t do it. They are still restricted as to where they can walk, maybe not for the same reasons.” This realization was very emotive for Mr. Lembe; “I never thought about it, about the message I’m putting out there. What I’ve never thought about is how they’re receiving it.”

Personal histories of students

Atif

“I’m going to push back,” I explain to Atif towards the end of our interview, “because you say that apartheid doesn’t affect your life that much. You have a lot of opportunities. You’re academically gifted, sports are gifted, you’ll almost certainly go to university, and a good university like UCT. But at the same time you can’t go to Highgate...” Afterall, he had just explained how “the economic means isn’t there to send me to that school.”

Atif smiles, slightly bashful at compliments which he has heard many times before. “Yes,” he replies, “I understand what Miss is saying.”

I feel a pang of sadness and frustration at this gentle admission; sadness that a student like Atif can't access a school like Highgate, and frustration at the contradictions that keep arising from these data. I push on; "So how do you...?" I stumble, "So to me it's...", before finally blurting out what's on my mind; "That is a consequence of apartheid!"

"I don't know, Miss, I don't know," Atif replies in his characteristically modest way. "Maybe because my parents didn't have... they couldn't go study further or something like that, Miss. That's why they sit with jobs that they have now and they...", he pauses. "My parents just want the best for me, Miss, that's why I'm here..."

A second pause, followed by a rushed confession; "But if I could go to Highgate I would definitely go."

Atif was a quiet student, with a face heavily scarred from acne, who sat at the back of the classroom. I never heard him speak or joke with his classmates, or contribute to the lively classroom banter. Yet on the two occasions when Mr. Lembe invited me to run activities with the class, Atif finished first and with a perfect score. "Not just with academics," Mr. Lembe nodded, "he's also our champion athlete".

Despite his accent, his name, the languages he spoke, and his neighborhood community, Atif identified as Black. This was not a political choice. Rather, he referenced his "darker complexion" and the fact that his grandparents had been classified as Black under apartheid. Atif's grandfather had been an apartheid activist, and most of his aunts and uncles were part of organizations opposing apartheid. His parents however did not oppose apartheid. "When they were born," explained Atif, "they just went with the flow of apartheid because they were scared and afraid."

I wondered whether this racial identity shaped Atif's perspective on history. He was the only student that I interviewed at John May High who believed that life today was better than under apartheid. He agreed that South Africa had a serious problem with crime, yet attributed it to unemployment and

poverty, rather than the absence of police. He was also the only student who credited the anti-apartheid movement with the establishment of basic human rights and freedoms in South Africa.

Yet he chose not to reflect too deeply on the effects of apartheid. “It affects everyone, Miss,” he told me, “but for me, it’s your choice if you want to go down that road. It’s your decisions that affect your future, Miss.”

Candice

Candice sits down opposite me in the empty classroom, full of girlish energy. I am reminded that her mother used to be an air hostess, and that she has similar ambitions. She fixes her hair, straightens her back, crosses her legs, and rests her hands in her lap, as though this were a job interview that she was about to nail.

“My pa, my great-pa’s family comes from India”, she explains, as I ask about her family history; “I’m half Indian and I’m half Coloured. So through my pa’s side it’s mostly Indian and through my ma’s side it’s mostly Coloured.”

I hope I don’t look too surprised. I should know by now that behind the “Coloured” label lie culturally diverse and geographically complex family histories. This school is far from “racially homogenous”.

“So how do you identify?” I push, curious about the relationship between the label and the lived experience.

“I don’t really identify myself as Coloured or whatever... but if someone asks me what I am I’ll say I’m Coloured.”

“But personally...?” I query, reflecting on my own mixed heritage.

“Personally”, she states with confidence, “I know that I am Indian and I am Coloured.”

Candice sat at the front of the class. She was a happy and engaged student, immaculately presented, often teasing her classmates and joking with Mr. Lembe. She liked history, but “for what I’m going to study I don’t need history, I need more geography,” she would tell me. Geography was necessary for a qualification in travel and tourism. It also required less essay-writing.

She hoped to follow her mother, who had been an airhostess and then a travel agent. Yet her mother was now unemployed and struggling to get a job. “She’s looking for a job,” explained Candice, “but they say ‘no, no place.’ The Blacks, they’re getting all the jobs”.

Candice and her mother were lodgers in a large house with a live-in landlord, who was also unemployed. Over the course of the year Candice’s absenteeism became noticeable. At the end of one class Mr. Lembe raised it with her. “What is wrong, and what must I do?” he asked, in his usual uncomplicated manner. Candice squirmed, deeply uncomfortable, as though she had been physically pinned down. She refused to answer until eventually Mr. Lembe allowed her to escape.

“Shouldn’t her parents be contacted?” I ask. Mr. Lembe shrugs. “It’s a matter for her class teacher,” he concludes; “The issue must be a domestic one.”

Implications for the study

The ethnographic descriptions offered in Part One provide a context for analysis and discussion on the ways in which historical legacies were negotiated and constructed in the classroom. John May High had several unusual characteristics which influenced the style of engagement within history lessons.

John May High School was the only school in the sample with a majority-Coloured student and staff population. It was furthermore located in a predominantly Coloured neighborhood. The students were therefore coming from a particular cultural context; one which was characterized by extraordinary levels

of crime and violence, which had a unique historical relationship with apartheid, and which was not represented in the South African history textbooks.

John May High School was also the only school in the sample which, as an institution, had resisted apartheid. Many of the older teachers at John May High – including Mr. Lembe – participated in the anti-apartheid protests of the 1980s. They considered themselves to be part of the history they were teaching. This undoubtedly altered the way in which history was taught. Mr. Lembe for example was especially upset by the school's current problems, given its proud history. He was also disappointed in students who didn't think that apartheid was "all bad", given what he had personally suffered.

Lastly the resources of the school influenced the way in which history was taught. The lack of Wi-Fi, projectors, or computers meant that Mr. Lembe relied on textbooks and photocopied sheets. Most frequently however he would simply talk to the students. There was therefore little student engagement in the classes.

While these characteristics do not make a certain construction of historical legacies inevitable, they may help to frame the analysis below.

Part Two

In Part Two I describe the ways in which historical legacies were constructed in the classroom, and in doing so I seek to understand how students learned to think about the relationship between past and present. As described in Chapter 4, I unpack this engagement with legacies of the past first by exploring the way that Simon Lembe spoke about the relationship between the past and the present, and then by looking at how the students spoke about the relationship between the past and the present.

In regard to the way historical legacies were constructed by the teacher, I focus on Mr. Lembe's emphasis on history as being either continuous or discontinuous with the present, as well as to what extent past

circumstances can be causally linked to present circumstances. Regarding how historical legacies were constructed by the students I focus on how John May High students explained contemporary social issues, and how the personal histories of the students as well as their history classes related to their constructions of historical legacies. I do not assume that the way historical legacies are constructed by the students is a direct result of the way they are constructed by Mr. Lembe. Rather, I seek to explore the interactions in the classroom, and the ways in which ideas about the past and the present are expressed and mediated by both the teacher and the students.

How historical legacies are constructed by the teacher

Mr. Lembe's comments about the relationship between the past and present were the most complex and contradictory of all the teachers' in this sample. He believed passionately in the political value of history, and he wanted to use history so that his students could see,

“that the reality of their lives today is not just the result of a particular set of conditions and circumstances, but also that they can change that. History is just a vehicle. It's just a vehicle for looking at your life today and understanding it today and seeing how you can not only change but contribute to that. Otherwise it's just the past; I remember it because I get paid to remember it, and if you give me money I will tell it to you.”

However, while being a proud supporter of the anti-apartheid movement during his youth, he was confronted with students who were not interested in politics, and who did not think that democracy had brought any material change to their lives. This produced a complex tension between wanting to communicate the success of the historical anti-apartheid struggle, wanting to show his students the ways in which their poverty is a result of apartheid, and yet wanting to affirm their experience that democracy had failed.

In this section I will describe how Mr. Lembe spoke about this relationship between past and present in reference to ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’, before then turning to look at how relationships of causality were addressed.

Continuity and discontinuity

Throughout the year Mr. Lembe described the past as being both continuous and discontinuous with the present. Similar to the categories I used in the previous chapters, by “continuous” I refer to statements that Mr. Lembe made that implicitly or explicitly suggest that present-day South Africa is the same as South Africa in the past. By “discontinuous” I refer to statements that implicitly or explicitly suggest that present-day South Africa is different from South Africa in the past.

When Mr. Lembe described continuity with the past it was always negative. For example, he spoke frequently about the issue of land as being a problem that was created during the colonial past, but which has not yet been resolved:

T: Let me break it down: Black people have systematically been deprived of land in our country. Black people were farmers; they were originally owners of land. I’ve never seen a Black farmer, have you?

SS: No

T: When we talk about farmers we think of White people, Boers. How is it that we used to be owners and now we are migrant labor, the bottom of the working class?

In these instances, Mr. Lembe tried to convince his students that the conditions of their lives had historical roots, and how unfortunate it was that South Africa had not yet been able to distance itself from these structural continuities. For example, in regard to protests which were common in the students’ communities, he drew a line of continuity between the demands under apartheid and now;

“People were tired of their living conditions. We in 1976, this is 2018. How many years? Here - 2018 - people are protesting for these two things: housing and service delivery. Almost 30 years into democracy, they’re still protesting. That’s heavy.”

In regard to university access, he suggested a continuity between the Freedom Charter which said that “the doors of learning should be opened”, and Fees Must Fall which campaigned for free education;

“The issues of Fees Must Fall. Students say the doors of learning are closed. John May gets a 96% or 97% pass rate. How many of those who pass get to go to university, get to do tertiary education of any kind? I’d like to get 2017 class back and ask how many are at university. I’d like to see the numbers. How many of you are working? How many are at home? Very few of our learners go on to study... This is to do with the Freedom Charter which we will study next year.”

However, he also introduced a class dimension into the discussion, arguing that this negative continuity with the past disproportionately influenced low-income families;

“They [middle-class families] get an opportunity at integration faster than we do. An opportunity to mix with kids of different races more than we do because of our socio-economic status, where we come from. We go to schools in our community which are largely Coloured and that forms our world. I saw it with my niece, she’s integrated whereas for us it’s primary to high school, it’s the same thing. We don’t really get a chance to participate in it. Still people with money who get to experience that fruit. Kids with parents in higher income brackets than us get to experience that.”

For low-income families who cannot afford to move out of the communities they were relocated to, the “fruits” of democracy, e.g. racial integration, are not available to them. The past was constructed as continuous with the present for “us” because “we” do not have money.

Similarly, Mr. Lembe spoke about the dangerous attitudes that still existed and which he argued were ingrained into Black people from years of colonization and oppression. When discussing Black Consciousness for example, he described how Steve Biko explained that Black people have an inferiority complex although “we come from a proud history. Kings walked this continent.” Yet even today, Mr. Lembe lamented, beauty standards are defined by White people;

“We try to make ourselves not to look like ourselves. Look at women on TV, and I’m not hating, nice women, beautiful Black women, but they all have something in common. They’re not dark dark. All of them have a weave. It’s not their hair. They look nice but what is it really? It’s White hair.”

When Mr. Lembe positioned the past as discontinuous with the present however, the narrative was complicated. On one hand, he spoke about how successful South Africa had been at moving away from the past. For example, the students at John May High annually celebrated the end of exams by going to beaches that were forbidden to Mr. Lembe when he was a student. He also spoke about the educational opportunities that students have now, to attend historically-White schools and universities. He celebrated peace and freedom in South Africa, given what might have happened because of the level of anger under apartheid; “I also think there’s a lot right considering our history. This country is not a bloodbath. We didn’t go out on the streets to murder White people.”

However, these discontinuous examples were often not convincing. “Equal education”, for example, was an issue which Mr. Lembe and his students often referred to as a feature of democratic South Africa, yet it was clearly not the case that education was equal. As Mr. Lembe himself identified, “Parents can’t afford for us to study.” There therefore existed a tension between the ideological desire to present post-apartheid South Africa as substantially different from the past, yet the reality of the lived experience. It became impossible to construct an image of a “new” South Africa, while also helping students to construct historical explanations for their under-resourced, dangerous, and mono-racial communities.

Mr. Lembe was also tasked with responding to the lived experiences of his students who argued that South Africa today was not only different from life under apartheid, but worse. They argued, for example, that crime, gang violence, drug usage, and food prices had all increased during democracy. Students claimed that unlike under apartheid, the police now had little authority and did not punish criminals. Although it was clear that Mr. Lembe did not agree with this assessment of South Africa, he begrudgingly acknowledged that it was true for this group of students. In the spirit of trying to connect with the students, and validate what they were learning from the oral history interviews, he would often repeat what the students reported to him; “Lots of old people say that it was better under apartheid”.

The combined effect of the way in which Mr. Lembe taught history as being continuous or discontinuous with the present over the course of the year was the construction of a South Africa that felt hopeless. His students were trapped between a society that continued to suffer from historical continuities, and which at the same time had materially deteriorated since the end of apartheid. There were few convincing examples of how South Africa had improved since the end of apartheid, particularly if you were poor. Furthermore, it was not clear that the “fruits” of democracy – integrated education and neighborhoods – were desirable to the students, who felt threatened by their perception of increasing Black political dominance.

Causal relationships between past and present

Mr. Lembe consistently constructed causal relationships between the past and present, and it was clear that he personally believed that contemporary South Africa was shaped by the colonial and apartheid past. However, unlike Mr. Richardson, he rarely explored in depth the mechanisms by which the past influenced the present. Instead, these connections were often just implied.

For example, Mr. Lembe constructed a causal relationship between poverty and the lack of land redistribution:

“The homelands they allocated was the most – there was nothing you could do with it. It wasn’t suitable for farming, no infrastructure or industries where these people could be employed. You squeeze 80% of the population into a small area of land that nothing can be done with. Need to look at why our communities are very poor. We need to retrace our steps. This issue of land is very topical. It’s a great point of conversation in our country today, it goes back to 1913.”

In this statement he urges his students to look at *why* our communities are poor, and he speaks about poverty in the context of the historical removal of land. However Mr. Lembe does not help the students to construct the “mechanism” – the detailed connections between the past and the present. Since South Africa no longer has homelands, why are people still poor? It is also interesting to note that the Coloured population was never relocated to the homelands, and although Coloured people were dispossessed from their houses, most were not dispossessed from farming land. The issue of agricultural land is therefore not the reason why *their* communities are poor. Coloured communities are unlikely to benefit from the redistribution of land.

A causal relationship was also constructed between the Group Areas Act and the racialized geography of Cape Town;

“If we look at our community today we still feel the effects of these laws. We still live in Coloured communities. Langa is still Black. Those living in areas, living in other areas were forced to leave... A lot of communities we live in were started for people who lived in District Six.”

The lack of integration within the communities that the students came from was also reflected in Mr. Lembe’s comments about John May High School. For example, he explained that while John May High was a mostly Coloured school, it should be a “masala mix” of racial identities. “This class is supposed to be mixed,” he said; “This is still reminiscent about this policy. Apartheid is still very real.”

Once again however, it was not clear why “we still feel the effects of these laws”, or how “this is still reminiscent about this policy.” Mr. Lembe made no attempt to tease out why Coloured people still live in Coloured communities or attend Coloured schools. While he implied that living in Coloured communities or going to mono-cultural schools was undesirable, it was not clear to me that the students agreed. Indeed, unlike at Stamford High, the students did not entertain nostalgia for District Six, or for a more integrated community. These comments were therefore not received with enthusiasm, as they might have been in Stamford High or Thokozani High.

The quality of the education at John May High was a particularly upsetting issue for Mr. Lembe and he frequently referred to what he saw as the effects of apartheid on education. For example, after an exchange visit where three John May High students visited Southgate High, he told the students;

“The government paid less on Black schools than on any other race. We can still see these difficulties today. One of the first things the exchange students to Southgate High said was that ‘Sir, it looks like a campus’.”

In private conversations Mr. Lembe expressed concern that while the exchange students – one Black and two Coloured – had noticed how wealthy Southgate High was, they did not attribute the wealth discrepancy to historical factors; they were failing to construct the historical legacies that Mr. Lembe wanted them to construct. I however was struck by something else; when asked if they would rather attend Southgate High, only the Black student said that she would. The two Coloured students preferred to stay in a majority-Coloured school, despite the relative lack of resources. It was not clear therefore, that the students shared Mr. Lembe’s concern about either the racial homogeneity of the school, or the quality of its education.

Mr. Lembe also spoke to his class at length about how his attitudes towards race had been caused by his upbringing under apartheid;

“My mind still sees color. My sister is in a mixed relationship and it’s not a big deal for me but when I see a mixed-race couple, I look. At the Waterfront I see a Black dude with a White girl. I look, I want to see what’s up. Am I wrong to look?”

He quizzed his students to see if any of them had White friends, and how they came to meet White people. He asked if their parents would mind if they dated a White person, or “what about a Black guy?” He routinely turned to the one Xhosa-speaking student in the class to ask her questions about Black culture. He spoke at length about his White niece and how people stared at her when she came to stay in a Coloured neighborhood. However, as will be discussed in the next section, it was not clear to me that the students interpreted Mr. Lembe’s racialized lens as a legacy of apartheid, rather than a normalizing of racial differences.

According to Mr. Lembe, the students he taught “don’t see the structural factors that gave rise to the circumstances”. However, while Mr. Lembe spoke frequently about the ways in which he thought the past caused present circumstances, these connections were rarely explained in any detail, and he almost never invited students to engage with these legacy constructions.

This was complicated by an historical narrative that Mr. Lembe evoked, which seemed more relevant to the lives of Black people than Coloured people. For example, the issue of homelands and land redistribution was unlikely to have felt relevant to Coloured students. The historic underfunding of “Black schools”, did not speak to the students’ racial concerns. Fees Must Fall was seen as a largely Black student movement. Coming from a teacher who was perceived to be Black by his students, and who ideologically believed that Coloured people were Black, it was perhaps unsurprising that the students often refused to engage with Mr. Lembe’s construction of historical legacies.

How historical legacies are constructed by the students

The students at John May High were the least willing to engage with this research. Few students volunteered to be interviewed, and they would frequently miss our appointments. None of the students had consistent access to a mobile phone, and this made coordination particularly difficult.

The student data from this school are therefore limited. I was not able to arrange any focus groups, and the only student I was able to interview more than once was Kim. The following analysis is therefore of data collected from individual interviews.

The relationship between past and present

With the exception of Atif, a striking feature of the student interviews was how little any of the students spoke about the past with their parents. Candice's grandparents, for example, were forcibly relocated under the Group Areas Act, and her aunt was forced to separate from the White man she wanted to marry. Yet Candice only learned of these events during her research for the oral history project; "That's when everything came out", she explained. When I queried whether perhaps this past was a secret, she disagreed; "It's not a secret, it's maybe because they didn't think it was important to tell me."

Kim had a similar story. She believed that her father boycotted during the anti-apartheid protests. "He threw stones at the police," she said, "and then they shot at him, but he ran." However mentioning his involvement was an afterthought to Kim, who was adamant that her family did not care about politics;

"Like, I said that my mommy didn't care, so she raised me to not care about other stuff. So I really don't care. I don't even watch the news. I was just raised like that. My mommy was like, 'it's stupid, just don't watch that. Here, put on Barney. There's Barney for you.' We just don't care about politics."

"My grandparents, I don't think they cared either. Our whole family just doesn't care."

The students identified two reasons for their lack of interest in this history. The first was that the history was “in the past”. Kim for example, didn’t feel sad when she learned about apartheid because “it’s history, it’s over”. Candice similarly felt that “in my family’s past or whatever because it’s now different, it’s a new generation.” During a discussion on the oral history project a student argued that apartheid didn’t affect them because “most of the people who lived under apartheid have died.” I could see that this attempt to locate, apartheid in the distant past surprised Mr. Lembe. “Twenty years... a lot of them are still alive,” he replied.

The second reason that the students identified for their lack of interest, was that the past was “stupid”. “It’s sad how some people had to die for stupid reasons,” explained Kim. It was also “stupid” to hark back to the past “because you have to live like that, feel like there’s someone better than you all the time, and you can’t go to certain places.” The reason why Mr. Lembe was upset about the past was because he “took it to the head maybe a little bit too much. I think he really cared about politics and about how everything is.” Simply not caring about the stupid past saved a person from the discomfort of being emotionally involved in it.

Candice similarly felt that while apartheid did “live on”, it only lived on because people believed in the false notion of race. To believe in race was nonsensical because “as Miss said in the previous lessons²², we are all just human. There is no Coloured, it’s just the mind tells us, ‘you’re White, you’re Coloured, you’re Black, you’re Indian’. I don’t actually believe in that.”

The students did not believe that apartheid had affected them. When I asked Candice whether she felt the apartheid history was relevant to her life, she replied simply, “no, it doesn’t mean anything to me”. Kim similarly felt that “maybe in some areas,” South Africa had been affected by apartheid, “but I really don’t know.” When I asked Clint if the apartheid history was relevant to him he replied, “I actually don’t know, maybe I think... no I don’t think so.” He went on to say of the teacher, “he tells stories that aren’t

²² Candice refers to a class I helped to facilitate which dealt with the topic of race as a social construct.

really relevant to now sometimes, and he tells about... well, you basically need it for exams and stuff.” Atif similarly pointed to his opportunities as evidence that apartheid didn’t affect him.

These responses were not surprising, given what I had observed in the classroom. On one occasion I ran an activity for the students. I gave them each a “source” – for example, a photograph or newspaper clipping – and from these sources the students were asked to decipher various apartheid laws. The source that corresponded to the Group Areas Act was a 2016 map of Cape Town, which indicated the racial demographics of each neighborhood. It was clear from the map that Cape Town’s neighborhoods were still racially divided. The students understood what the map depicted, and they had learned about the Group Areas Act in a previous class, however they did not connect the map and the law. The racial segregation of their city was so normalized, that they did not attribute it to historical factors. I reflected that this might be because the communities that these students came from were largely the same as the community in which they went to school. Unlike the Stamford High or Thokozani High students, the John May High students had little first-hand experience of crossing these racialized neighborhood boundaries.

When I asked Clint why there are so few White people who live in his neighborhood, he attributed it to apartheid, however he explained that Coloured people “are probably used to here and they [White people] are used to being there”. Clint therefore constructed residential segregation as a legacy of apartheid. However, unlike the Stamford High students, the “mechanism” of this legacy construction was not structural but emotional. Where one lived was a matter of personal preference, and that personal preference had been shaped by apartheid.

With the exception of Atif, all of the students thought that life under apartheid was better than now. “I enjoyed learning about our past”, explained Kim, “I enjoyed learning how it’s actually easier that time to live than here, this time... There’s more crime now than there was before and money now is scarce.” Crime and food prices were universally given as an explanation as to why life was better under apartheid.

However, it was difficult to ascertain how the students understood the relationship between the end of apartheid and reduced living standards. Candice implied that life was harder because the Black government prioritized Black people, while a student during a lesson blamed President Zuma's corruption.

Yet despite this lack of interest in the past and the conviction that life was better under apartheid, I suspected that deep hurt lay beneath the surface. During one class Mr. Lembe invited me to join a discussion about the nature of race and racism. We spoke about how race is constructed and gave opportunity for the students to ask questions. A male student, at the front of his class, very quietly and with evident discomfort asked, "Why did they call us kaffirs²³?" The class became silent and still, waiting for the answer to this heartbreaking question which seemed to encapsulate so much of South Africa's history. I replied that in order to take away someone's land and force them to work for you, you had to make them feel inferior, and that by using racial slurs, White people were able to make Black and Coloured people feel inferior. I was surprised that given the general lack of interest in history, this was the question that felt most relevant to the class.

Atif however was remarkably different from his classmates. He was very informed about his family's history during apartheid, explaining for example that his grandfather had lived in District Six and then had been moved to Bonteheuwel under the Group Areas Act. He attributed his parents' low-income jobs to their poor education under apartheid. He furthermore saw great relevance in learning about history since it's "what makes South Africa South Africa today, Miss." He went on to say;

"For me, as a person, to understand history is so that I can know what people went through to make South Africa what it is today. Because without them we wouldn't have certain rights or certain things like we can do today, Miss. And the struggle for them was, how can I say? It was hard. And they sacrificed their lives to make future lives better."

²³ An insulting term for a Black African.

Atif certainly identified problems with contemporary South Africa. He agreed with his classmates for example, that there was an increase in crime and that life was very expensive. However he did not think that life was better under apartheid. Rather he saw issues like racism and poverty as a left-over from the past. “I won’t say it’s very finished but I won’t say it’s also not finished, Miss,” is how he constructed apartheid’s contemporary legacies. “There are still racists” for example, and “people fought for equality and people are not taking advantage of that, because they’re still judging people.” Furthermore, the poverty in South Africa, the fact that “people are still fighting for the land”, “unemployment”, “human rights”, and that “some people don’t have access to water or things like that” were believed to be legacies of apartheid.

Atif concluded by saying, “That’s why I think that, those, that is left over from apartheid because basic human rights of people are still like being abused and stuff like that.” However, unlike the students at Thokozani High or Stamford High, Atif struggled to explain the causal mechanisms of the legacies he constructed. This was the challenge that Atif faced when he tried to explain why there was so much unemployment, as I discuss in the following section.

The difference in opinion between Candice, Kim, and Clint on the one hand, and Atif on the other is difficult to account for. They grew up in similar communities, and attended the same history classes. However perhaps Atif’s Black identity shaped the way in which he engaged with South African history, prompting family discussions about the past. Even though Atif’s parents had not been involved in the resistance to apartheid, it was clear that he was proud of his grandfather, aunts and uncles, and that he felt connected to this history. He was also a generally high-performing student, so perhaps his ability to engage with what was being taught differentiated him from his classmates who did not respond to Mr. Lembe’s messaging.

The contrast between Atif and his classmates highlights the limitations of history teaching on a student’s constructions of historical legacies. It furthermore suggests the influence that racial identity and

background may have on how legacies are constructed. This issue will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Understanding contemporary issues: Unemployment

Adopting an approach similar to Duquette (Duquette, 2015) I sought to understand how the students in the interviews explained contemporary issues facing their society, and whether or not history was used as one of the explanatory factors. Unemployment and the increased cost of living standards was an issue that all of the students except Clint spoke about during our interview. Candice, Kim, and Atif described it as a serious problem in their communities. However, the way in which the students explained the causes and consequences of unemployment were different from each other

Candice had personal experience of unemployment, given that her mother could not find work. She attributed the lack of employment in the Coloured community to Black people who took all the jobs. For example, in three instances she describes how Black people take Coloured peoples' jobs:

"I think that there is a bit of apartheid now because of racism, stuff like that, and nowadays Blacks are getting more jobs than Coloured people when they finish matric so like, Blacks are now taking over, so there's no more Whites now, the ones that are taking over everything, it's more Blacks. And in apartheid, Coloureds and Blacks were more together and now we're separated basically."

"I don't know but from where, like on the news or whatever, you just see like Blacks and they're just getting the jobs, it's for Coloureds and other races, it's actually hard for them to get the jobs. Because of whatever, they're just getting them."

"I'm saying that Coloureds and Blacks were together in apartheid and now everything is divided and now the Blacks are running for the jobs and Coloureds mustn't get the jobs, we need to get the jobs first, and things like that, and we are missing out of job opportunities and stuff."

Especially with older people who is unemployed and they're Coloured and then they will say 'now but then this one and this one, there's no space like that'. My mummy, she's looking for a job but they say 'no, no place.'"

Candice is effectively describing a situation of “reverse racism”; where once White people held power, now Black people are in charge. Black and Coloured people used to be united, but as soon as Black people took power they abandoned the Coloured community. Candice therefore does use history to construct explanations for unemployment in Coloured communities. She describes racism, for example, as left over from apartheid, whereas Black political dominance is left over from the transition to democracy.

Kim had similar ideas, but these were much less developed and drew less explicitly on historical factors. For example, she explained that “money now is scarce” because “society is just growing” and people are “being corrupt”. When I asked her why society is growing she attributed this to more children, and pointed to overcrowding. However, she seemed very uncertain of her answers. “It’s like people want to take over some people,” she explains, perhaps hinting at the racial conflict between Black communities and Coloured communities that Candice described.

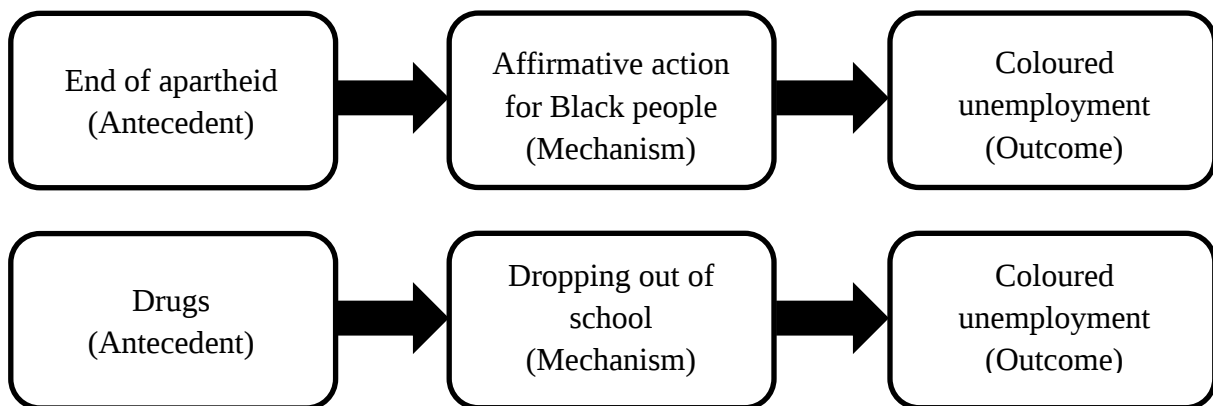
Kim went on to say that “now there’s fighting of the races that ‘it’s our land’, but it’s all of our land.” It is unclear here whether she is referring to historic land claims made by Black South Africans, or whether she is referring to a common conflict in which Black people build informal settlements next to Coloured communities who then try to forcibly remove the dwellings. Ultimately however she concludes with, “I don’t know why they’re going on,” suggesting an inability to fully articulate why living standards have dropped since 1994.

In contrast to Candice, Atif had an ahistorical understanding of why there was so much unemployment, which foregrounded individual responsibility;

“Maybe because of... I actually don’t know. Maybe because of drugs, Miss. I’m not sure. People drop out of school and things. And maybe because they don’t understand the work or something. And then they just don’t feel the need to learn it, and to make something of themselves.”

Unlike Candice who placed responsibility on Black people and the structural reasons why Coloured people would not be eligible for jobs under a Black government, Atif blamed drugs and a devaluation of education. His position somewhat reflected that of Mr. Lembe, who said that while a lack of money made success more difficult, ultimately people held themselves back as a result of their attitude. It was interesting for example, that Atif did not mention the quality of education when thinking about how students do not understand their school work. He acknowledges that his parents “couldn’t study further” and therefore had low-income jobs, however he doesn’t attribute the same limitations to his generation.

Diagram 5: Contrast between Candice and Atif’s explanations for unemployment



This emphasis on personal responsibility was similar to Thandiwe’s. Thandiwe was also the top history student at Thokozani High, and someone who was academically succeeding despite the limited quality of her education. Although Thandiwe could articulate why someone might be poor as a result of apartheid, she did not attribute her own circumstances to that history. It is therefore worth considering Atif’s sense of agency when he interprets unemployment as a lack of wanting to “make something of themselves.” Again, this will be explored further in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The data collected from these classroom observations and focus groups provide a rich insight into the various ways in which historical legacies were constructed to interpret contemporary South Africa. Apartheid was taught by Mr. Lembe as though it was continuous with the present, and was the cause of many contemporary problems. Racism, land inequality, poverty, a lack of housing, and inadequate education were all described by Mr. Lembe as the result of the apartheid past. In this regard Mr. Lembe took a very similar approach to Mr. Richardson.

However, unlike Mr. Richardson, Mr. Lembe's students expressed negative views about a contemporary South Africa in which "Blacks are now taking over" and life is harder than before. To counter this narrative, Mr. Lembe sought to describe post-apartheid South Africa as a place in which many past evils had been overcome. For example, he described the civic freedoms that all South Africans now enjoy, and the unity that had been created during the anti-apartheid protests. This produced somewhat contradictory legacy constructions, in which contemporary South Africa was both liberated from the evils of the past while also being trapped by them.

Mr. Lembe furthermore did not go into any detail regarding how he constructed the legacies of apartheid. He drew connections between "land" and "poverty" for example, but did not spell out the mechanism which explained how these two issues were related. This may be attributed to Mr. Lembe's oratorical teaching style, rather than his ideological position on these matters. While Mr. Richardson had a teaching style that was very controlled and methodical, enabling him to carefully scaffold quite deep discussions, Mr. Lembe spoke effusively and at length. His classes contained many illustrative stories, but little methodical detail. In part this was because he lacked access to a projector.

The students at John May High School largely remained opposed to Mr. Lembe's constructions of historical legacies; namely, that the poverty and divisions in our society are a consequence of the past

which we must try to change. Even Atif, who was willing to accept that apartheid left negative legacies struggled to explain how issues like crime, drug abuse, or unemployment resulted from the apartheid past. While the issue of history that comes from the home is of clear significance here, the lack of mechanism which clearly articulated the link between the past and present might have prevented his students from accepting the legitimacy of Mr. Lembe's position.

Chapter 9

Discussion

Introduction

In each of the previous four chapters I have provided rich ethnographic portraits of Grade 9 history classrooms in Cape Town. I have sought to analyze how apartheid legacies were constructed and negotiated by both the teacher and students. In this analysis I have considered not only formal teaching time, but also the ways in which school culture and personal experiences mediate the construction of historical legacies. As I have argued in Chapter 2, this is important for understanding what history education contributes to transitional justice.

In this chapter I bring together these four case studies to discuss the central question of this dissertation; How do students in South Africa learn to construct historical legacies in their Grade 9 history classrooms? In discussing this question I look first at how historical legacies were constructed in different classrooms and among different students. I then turn to a discussion of the factors that mediated the ways in which legacies were constructed.

I end this chapter with a discussion of how constructed legacies are used by students in post-apartheid South Africa. In doing so I reflect upon the ways in which history can be liberating in its ability to explain one's life circumstances, or a source of discomfort and hopelessness to young people who feel trapped by the past. I then discuss what these findings mean for the role of history education in the field of transitional justice.

Part One: How are historical legacies constructed?

In this section I offer an overview of the four history classes and discuss how the teachers constructed historical legacies. I compare their approaches, drawing attention to key differences and similarities. I then turn to a discussion of how the students constructed historical legacies. I present this as a comparison of three Coloured students from three different schools, and four Black students from four different schools. In framing the comparison in this way I demonstrate how racial identities and family backgrounds intersect with legacy thinking as promoted in the classroom setting.

Teachers and Historical Legacies

Mr. Richardson at Stamford High

Stamford High School was established as a school for academically high-achieving students who came from low-income backgrounds. The demographics of the student body were half Black and half Coloured, however almost half the teachers were White. The students were also the most upwardly mobile of all the students participating in this research; unlike their parents they were highly likely to attend university.

Mr. Richardson – the Head of History at Stamford High – was a young child when apartheid ended. When he spoke about the apartheid past, he largely referred to it as continuous with the present, and emphasized the ways in which contemporary South Africa was negatively influenced by the past. This was uncontroversial to students who found it empowering to construct historical explanations for the financial and social circumstances of their families.

Mr. Cilliers at Southgate High

Southgate High School was an historically White school, which due to its catchment area still attracted a majority White student and teacher population. At R42,000 per year it was the most expensive school in the sample, and this was reflected in superior school resources, such as sports fields and projectors.

Mr. Cilliers – the Head of History at Southgate High – rarely spoke about the apartheid past, and instead focused on the history of the Holocaust. He positioned the past as being something which we have happily moved away from and which we should keep at a distance. Furthermore, historical legacies were constructed as being of an emotional, rather than structural nature.

Mr. Mzamane at Thokozani High

Thokozani High School was the least well-funded school in this sample, charging only R1000 per year. This was reflected in the poor quality of the school buildings and resources. Although situated in an historically White neighborhood, the school attracted an entirely Black student and teacher population. Classes were taught in English, however in all other contexts isiXhosa was spoken.

Mr. Mzamane – the Grade 9 history teacher at Thokozani High – constructed the apartheid past as being both continuous and discontinuous with the present. While the apartheid laws had been abolished, the discriminatory attitudes and brutality that had characterized apartheid were still current. Mr. Mzamane did not however construct apartheid as having a structural legacy. Rather, he emphasized the brutality of apartheid, with vivid descriptions of the ways in which Black bodies were harmed.

Mr. Lembe at John May High

John May High School was a majority Coloured school, located in an historically Coloured neighborhood. The school had been involved in anti-apartheid protests in the 1980s, yet at the time of this research the school was facing some of its worst disciplinary issues.

Mr. Lembe – the Grade 9 history teacher at John May High School – frequently portrayed the apartheid past as negatively influencing the present. However, constructed legacies were undermined by concurrent attempts to demonstrate the ways in which life was better post-apartheid. This resulted in a tension in the way he constructed legacies of apartheid; life in contemporary South Africa was both bad because legacies of apartheid included poverty, inequality, and violence. Yet it was also good because South Africans were now free and equal.

Comparison of the different ways that the teachers constructed historical legacies

As illustrated throughout the previous four case study chapters, the ways in which the four teachers approached apartheid legacies was diverse. The diversity is particularly notable given that all four teachers taught in government schools, using the same textbooks and curricula, located within a 3km radius of each other. In this section I compare the different ways in which teachers constructed legacies of apartheid.

Teachers differed as to whether apartheid was spoken about as something that was far in the past, or as something that occurred recently. They furthermore differed as to whether they spoke about contemporary South African society as being continuous or discontinuous with South Africa during apartheid. Mr. Cilliers, for example, spoke about the past as something which South Africa had successfully overcome. Mr. Lembe and Mr. Richardson however, shared similarities in the ways that they spoke about the past as having contemporary negative consequences.

While Mr. Richardson and Mr. Lembe both constructed structural legacies of the past – ways in which past inequalities were perpetuated – Mr. Cilliers and Mr. Mzamane spoke about the emotional impacts of the past – the ways in which people still experienced trauma. While Mr. Richardson offered extensive detail as to how he understood apartheid to influence contemporary South Africa, Mr. Lembe simply

stated it without explaining why it was the case. Mr. Mzamane spoke about the brutality of apartheid, while Mr. Lembe spoke about the humiliation, and Mr. Cilliers excluded all mention of violence.

The extent to which White people could be held responsible for apartheid and its effects was another key difference. Mr. Cilliers spoke at length about how Germans must have known about the Holocaust, yet avoided any discussion of what White people knew during apartheid. Mr. Richardson showed how the decisions of White people under apartheid continue to hurt Black people, but steered clear of how White people should respond. Mr. Mzamane placed blame not only on White people under apartheid, but also on White people today. He then encouraged his students to fantasize about revenge.

That different teachers teach history differently is not in itself surprising. There is an extensive body of literature which shows this to be the case (Dryden, 1999; Mazinderani, 2012). However what these data highlight are the particular ways in which historical legacies are constructed differently; teachers were using the same historical events to develop different explanations for the present. Later in this chapter I explore some of the factors which might explain why these historical legacies were constructed differently in various classrooms.

How do students construct historical legacies?

An obvious question that these data pose is the extent to which teachers and history classes influenced the ways in which students learned to construct legacies of the past. In the USA, scholars such as Epstein (Epstein, 2009) have argued that students' racial identities and upbringings create an "interpretive frame" (Epstein, 2009, p. xviii) which shapes how they engage with their history lessons; students in the same history class develop different historical interpretations. This is an important consideration in the field of transitional justice since it challenges a central assumption that education can make a difference to how young people perceive the past, the present, and each other. In the South African context are

students' constructions of historical legacies primarily determined by the racial politics of the society they've grown up in, or do their history classes also play a role?

In this section I reflect on this question through comparisons of students who attended different schools yet had similar racial backgrounds. I explore the similarities in the ways they construct legacies of apartheid both between each other, and among their classmates. While recognizing the limitations of an approach that draws students together into analytical categories by virtue of racial identity, I nonetheless suggest that this is a valuable way to highlight the influence of school context. This comparison does not seek to expose why students construct historical legacies in this way. Rather it aims to show how different legacy constructions develop prominence in different spaces, and at times complement, interact, or compete with one another.

Meena, Candice, and Saara

Meena (Southgate High), Candice (John May High) and Saara (Stamford High) were all female students who identified as Coloured. Candice's mother was unemployed, Saara's father ran a small business, and Meena's parents held professional jobs. Both Saara and Meena's parents had been forcibly removed from their homes under the Group Areas Act, and both students spoke frequently to their fathers about apartheid history. Candice however spoke to her family about apartheid history for the first time during the oral history project, and claimed to not know anything about apartheid until she studied it in Grade 9.

There were interesting differences between these three students in regard to how they constructed apartheid legacies. Candice, for example, did not feel that apartheid had any influence on her life since "apartheid didn't live on". She considered herself to be a "new generation", and therefore believed that there was no relevant history. In particular Candice struggled to imagine how her life might have been different if apartheid had never occurred. When pushed for an answer she conceded that she might have

been living in a different place or attending a school with a more academic focus, however she could not explain why this was the case.

Like many of her classmates, Candice believed that life was better under apartheid “because of discipline, less crime, stuff like that, because there’s more crime now and stuff”. She didn’t know why there was more crime now, however suggested that if apartheid returned it might help people realize “that they’re doing something wrong”. Candice explained that under apartheid “Coloureds and Blacks were more together”, however in democratic South Africa the “Blacks are now taking over” and “you just see like Blacks and they’re just getting the jobs”. According to Candice, the Coloured community had first been oppressed by the Whites, and now by the Blacks, however once again she did not know why this was the case.

Candice’s construction of apartheid legacies was therefore very different from those shared by her teacher, Mr. Lembe. Mr. Lembe spoke frequently about the various ways he understood apartheid to impact contemporary South Africa, and never taught that the “Blacks are now taking over”. Although Candice spoke very little to her family about apartheid, these attitudes towards crime and race relations appear to have been dominant in her community.

Compared to Candice, Meena felt much more informed about apartheid history. Unlike her Southgate High classmates she spoke about the resistance to apartheid and could cite specific historical moments in that resistance, as well as examples of apartheid violence. She also felt informed about contemporary protests over land rights, and challenged her classmates when they claimed that UCT admitted students based primarily on their race.

Meena could also articulate her understanding of how apartheid continued to influence South Africa. For example, she believed that South Africa was still racially divided because there are people who lived in shacks. She claimed that apartheid made South Africa a Third World country, and that without apartheid South Africa would have been more racially integrated and less segregated. She also articulated

the ways in which she understood voting habits to be influenced by racial loyalties. This was very different from her classmates who believed that apartheid legacies were not structural, but largely concerned with feelings and attitudes which were principally racist and irrational. It was also different from the way in which Mr. Cilliers taught about apartheid; he rarely spoke about contemporary influences.

However, when it came to the ways in which Meena understood her own life to be influenced by apartheid, she constructed a narrative that was much more positive. She didn't think that a parent's educational opportunities could affect those of a child, and thus agreed with her classmates that intergenerational poverty could not be attributed to Bantu education. She furthermore believed that apartheid had actively aided her family in their success, since apartheid made them want to work harder. Without apartheid she suspected that her family might live in a less wealthy neighborhood. There was no exploration of why her parents needed to work hard to live in the same neighborhood that her White classmate's parents were born into.

There was therefore a tension in the way that Meena constructed apartheid legacies. She was visibly frustrated when her classmates claimed that there was no racism in the school. Indeed, Meena explained that her aunt would not send her cousin to Southgate High because her aunt believed the school to be racist. Meena's perspectives on the past were furthermore sidelined by her classmates during the focus group discussions. Yet while Meena articulated her understanding of the broader structural effects of apartheid on South African society, she was reluctant to apply these structural effects to her own life or experiences. While she believed that apartheid might have caused lasting damage to South Africa, she embraced Mr. Cilliers' narrative that the difficult past had been "overcome" and that people – like Meena's parents – had done "extraordinary things".

This legacy construction protected Meena from the uncomfortable conversations that may have occurred with her classmates if she had argued that apartheid disadvantaged her in material ways. Indeed, since

her classmates thought that any discussion of race was “stupid”, Meena ran the risk of alienating herself if she expressed racial differences. Personal disadvantage as a result of apartheid also did not fit into the interpretive framework that Mr. Cilliers had provided. According to Mr. Cilliers, apartheid’s legacies were one of sadness for the human rights that had been abused, but how could one feel sad for something that was not directly experienced? The trajectory of South African history was furthermore one of progress, and to “keep going on” about the past when it was so long ago was to create unnecessary discord.

This was very different from Saara, who spoke frequently and forcefully about the ways she believed apartheid influenced her life and the prospects of her family. Within the first minute of our interview she told me that if it was not for the apartheid government, her family would still be living in District Six, which was “an amazing place to be” and which had “no crime”. She would furthermore “be at a much better school”, and much wealthier since her family business wouldn’t have been confiscated. She was very comfortable articulating in detail how she understood herself to be a victim of apartheid, constructing relationships between past, present and personal in very direct and robust ways.

Indeed, there appeared to be no limit in Saara’s mind about what South Africa could have been had apartheid and colonialism not occurred. Without apartheid, she thought, “everyone would have the best school”, “there wouldn’t be racism”, and “if it weren’t for slavery that came to Africa and things like that we would have been richer than anyone else in the world... we would be richer than America ma’am.”

Saara’s analysis of the past was not angry or emotional. Rather, it was highly reasoned. Unlike Candice or Meena, she was eager to explain step-by-step how she constructed the “mechanism” by which apartheid had shaped her family’s journey; from having land confiscated during the colonial era, to the 1913 Land Act when people were forced to look for work in the cities, to the day her grandmother was

forcibly removed to Hanover Park, to her own birth in a segregated and under resourced neighborhood, and now to her family's claims for housing restitution.

In this regard Saara was similar to her Stamford High classmates, who were also eager to engage in an imagined alternative South Africa in which apartheid had never happened. There was no shame or threat in using history to explain one's poverty. This was particularly true in a school which emphasized each students' equality, and which actively sought to remove the stigma of needing financial assistance. Indeed, using history to construct explanations for one's life circumstances was encouraged by Mr. Richardson – a teacher who often drew attention to causal factors, and who gave examples of people who continued to live in under-resourced communities through no fault of their own.

However, unlike her Black classmates, Saara also emphasized the ways in which she believed life under apartheid was preferable to life now. In this regard her understanding of how the past related to the present was very similar to Candice's. For example, Saara spoke about poor infrastructure, expensive education, limited job opportunities, and corruption. "I'm not saying that apartheid was good," she explained, "but corruption wasn't that rife... it would be a once in the blue moon thing, and everyone used to do their job, there was passion for their job." She went on to say that "during apartheid there were gangs ma'am, but it wasn't like as violent as it is now." Interestingly, this led her to conclude that "the laws were very good and now they're not that good." Like Candice who thought that there was less discipline since apartheid had ended, Saara attributed crime and corruption to a problem in the post-apartheid criminal justice system;

"It's just like the justice system, because certain people, they, say for example someone kills someone, she gets three years and then parole afterwards and then someone would get like five years for stealing something. The unfairness..."

Given how forthcoming Saara was in the way she constructed causal mechanisms between the apartheid past and contemporary South Africa, it was surprising that she could not articulate a causal mechanism

between the end of apartheid and the rise of crime and corruption. “I don’t actually know if it has a relationship to apartheid,” she replied when I pushed her, “because I don’t know if people were corrupt in apartheid or not.” However, upon further reflection she explained, “I don’t think I’ve ever heard my daddy say the apartheid government was corrupt or anything. I mean there was corruption, but on a small scale.”

Since Mr. Richardson never expressed the view that life under apartheid was preferable to life today, it seems likely that this opinion was one that Saara learned from her family and community. Saara and Candice furthermore lived in similar neighborhoods, and so were likely exposed to similar legacy thinking. Yet Candice only expressed the view that life under apartheid was preferable to now. Saara however combined legacy constructions from home, with legacy constructions that were discussed in her history class, and which encouraged her to construct connections between the abuses of the past and the challenges of today.

Saara similarly grappled with historical explanations regarding the relationship between Black and Coloured communities. Candice, for example, thought that Coloured unemployment was due to the dominance of Black people who were getting all the jobs. Saara made reference to this understanding, however was also critical of it;

“I don’t think that like ‘Coloured, well, if Black people get more, like more than us, then we can’t have that equality in the country because like, some people get jobs and Coloured people are like ‘What about my job?’’... Ma’am, I don’t think like that. But there were Coloureds involved in the apartheid era but it wasn’t as much as Blacks, which is why they don’t get as much acknowledgement.”

Her claim that “I don’t think like that”, suggests that she is aware that some people – like Candice – think that affirmative action for Black people means that South Africa is still not equal. However unlike Candice, Saara historicizes the decision to prioritize jobs for Black people by explaining that Coloured

people were simply not as “involved” in the apartheid era. According to Saara, the decision to offer affirmative action therefore resulted from the particular historical legacies of certain communities.

Why was Saara willing and able to construct historical legacies to explain her life circumstances, while Candice eschewed legacy thinking? Both Mr. Richardson and Mr. Lembe believed that apartheid had contemporary influence on issues regarding wealth, land, and education. However, Mr. Richardson articulated these legacy constructions in minute detail, giving examples of the mechanisms by which he understood apartheid to have affected individuals. Saara drew on these detailed examples and applied them to her own life. Mr. Lembe however constructed the relationship between the past and the present in very general terms, often switching between what he saw as the negative influence of the past, and the positive ways in which South Africa overcame the past. It is possible that his approach was not sufficiently convincing to challenge the legacy constructions that Candice learned from home, or sufficiently detailed to provide the narrative framework which Candice could use to historically situate her life.

The wider racial demographics of the classroom, and issues of social mobility may have also played a part. Saara had many Black classmates, who were exposed to very different legacy constructions from their parents and communities (see section below). She was furthermore upwardly mobile and expressed confidence that she would overcome structural barriers that she attributed to apartheid. These perceived structural barriers were therefore not existentially threatening. Candice however had mostly Coloured classmates, and so was likely exposed to a narrower range of legacy constructions. She furthermore was not upwardly mobile, and it was perhaps safer to attribute her poverty to Black dominance, rather than to intractable apartheid legacies.

The comparison of these three students – Candice, Meena, and Saara – highlights the interesting and complex interplay between teacher, classmates, family, and community in regard to the historical legacies that students construct, use, and find convincing. It shows how teachers’ construction of

historical legacies contribute towards an interpretive framework for students to structure and relate their own ideas and experiences. However if this framework is weak, unconvincing, or contradictory, then students either cannot express themselves historically, or revert to the legacy thinking offered by their families. It furthermore shows how classmates and school culture can enable or prevent historical legacies from being constructed or articulated. Saara, for example, was encouraged by her teacher to use history to explain her personal life circumstances. However if Meena had done the same she would have alienated herself from her classmates who did not feel like the past had any relevance for their lives.

Aphiwe, Khwezi, Esther, and Atif

Aphiwe (Stamford High), Esther (Southgate High), Khwezi (Thokozani High), and Atif (John May High) all identified as Black students. They came from widely varying class backgrounds. Esther was adopted by White parents and lived in an historically White neighborhood. Khwezi lived in a particularly under-resourced informal settlement. Aphiwe lived in a mixed-race lower-middle income neighborhood, and Atif lived in a working class Coloured neighborhood. All four students spoke to their families about issues of race and life under apartheid, except for Esther who instead spoke to a friend. All four students believed that apartheid was very relevant to their lives.

Esther, unsurprisingly, was the biggest outlier in this group since she not only attended a predominantly White school, but also had White parents and neighbors. There was a striking tension in the way in which Esther spoke about race. On numerous occasions Esther explained that she did not notice race and did not notice any racism in the school. She claimed that the Dialogue Day did not have any effect on the school culture because race did not require any discussion. She was surprised when Macie claimed that one of their teachers was racist, and – unlike Meena – she did not know what the Jabulani Society was. She furthermore summarized the Black students in her year as “there’s me, and then there’s Mori’s group of friends”, suggesting that her friends were not Black.

On the other hand – unlike her White classmates – Esther knew that there were exactly seven Black students in her year group, and she could name each one of them. She also expressed discomfort when she walked through the Southgate High corridors and noticed that there were no Black people; “like often I’ll walk down the passages and I’ll be like ‘woah! Where are the rest of the Black people in the school?’”. When I asked whether the culture of the school was “White”, Alice disagreed, but Esther contradicted her; “I personally think that it is”. She went on to explain the awkwardness of being a racial minority:

“Sometimes it does feel a bit awkward, especially if you’re talking about it in class. Because in our class there’s only two Black people so it’s like, you know, when you’re talking about apartheid and stuff like that and I feel not like upset, but I often feel bad for everyone else in the class.”

When discussing racism it became clear that Esther was very aware of her race. She gave the example of a White man who was confused that her family had a car, and she expressed discomfort at going shopping alone in case someone accused her of stealing.

There was also a tension in the way that Esther constructed apartheid legacies. Esther was adamant that the Holocaust was much more violent and hate-filled than apartheid. She believed that South Africa was “backwards and dumb” since it hadn’t tried very hard to “move on”. She complained that people in South Africa talk and argue about race all the time, unlike the people in Germany who didn’t react as badly to the Holocaust. She was annoyed by affirmative action – which she believed was the government’s attempt to repeat the past – and she didn’t think that a parents’ education influenced a child’s opportunities. Esther thought that colonialism had made South Africa stronger, and felt there should be more emphasis placed on Black slave traders, rather than just blaming White people. She was furthermore certain that she would have been killed if she had lived in Nazi Germany since she would

have been “easy to spot”, yet did not express the same concern at the prospect of living in apartheid South Africa.

In this regard Esther’s attitudes towards the apartheid past were very similar to her White classmates, and to her teacher who constructed legacies of the past as being primarily emotional. Esther did not place any responsibility on White people for contemporary inequalities, and she did not think that we should focus on race since – as Mr. Cilliers had explained – it did not really exist. Like Mr. Cilliers, she constructed historical narratives in which the distant and unequal past had been overcome, and South Africa had achieved equality and democracy. According to Esther, continually referencing the past stymied the progress that had already been achieved.

However, when asked how her life might have been different if apartheid had never happened, Esther imagined that she might still be living with her biological parents:

“I think it would definitely be different for me because often I think about what financial situation were my biological parents in and if they had been, if there hadn’t been apartheid I might have still been with them because it might have been a financial situation that made me end up being adopted and everything so I definitely would have had a different life.”

She furthermore referred to apartheid when constructing an explanation as to why she was one of the few Black students at Southgate High:

“OK, well first of all it’s [Southgate High] a majority White school and it’s – I don’t know – like, it’s a school that you can go to if you have the money for it and because of obviously past experiences in South Africa it’s affected which kind of people have which kind of jobs and whether they are able to go to a school like Southgate High. So I know that often my parents say to me, because I’m adopted, they say things like, ‘you’re very advantaged as a person of my color skin to be able to go to a school like this.’”

The opinions Esther expressed about South African history and society therefore seemed to contradict her personal experiences. She claimed not to see race, yet she was acutely aware of her racial positioning in a majority White school. She was highly critical of those who would not “move on” from apartheid, yet she “often” thought about her biological parents and the life-altering impact that she imagined apartheid had on them and her. She eschewed an historical interpretation of South African society, claiming instead that many of the problems South Africa faces are a result of focusing too much on the past. Yet when she spoke about her own experiences, she offered a remarkably clear articulation of how the apartheid past might influence her present.

This was of course different from her classmate Meena, who constructed legacies to explain contemporary South African society, but rejected legacy constructions which implied that the past had negatively influenced her personally. I suspect the difference between these two students might lie in the racialized histories of their parents. Meena attended an elite school despite apartheid. According to Meena, her parents “worked hard” to move to an historically White neighborhood and send their daughter to an historically White school. Esther however, attended Southgate High because of apartheid. She suspected that apartheid might be the reason why she was adopted by White parents, who were able to give her the privileges that many Black people did not have. For Esther to construct personal legacies of apartheid was therefore not threatening to her classmates. Notably, Esther did not express any hurt or anger that her biological parents could not look after her. If she *blamed* apartheid for her adoption, these personal legacy constructions might have been less welcome.

The tension that Esther expressed regarding legacy constructions was very different to that of Khwezi. Like Esther, Khwezi believed that racism was a legacy of apartheid. However like Mr. Mzamane, Khwezi spoke about race as fixed categories as opposed to just “color pigment”. He said for example, that in history class he learned that “White people are different than Black people”, and agreed with his classmates that the problems of colonialism could be solved if White people went back to Europe and Black people came back to Africa. Unlike Esther who believed that the wrongs of the past should not be

addressed in reference to racial identity, Khwezi saw issues like land redistribution as being intimately tied to race and racial birthrights. Historical justice and race could not be separated.

Khwezi furthermore emphasized how much he believed White people had hurt his family and how angry he felt about this. He described how his grandmother would not tell him the sad stories of how much their family had to rely on White people, and he felt angry when he thought about how his great-grandfathers were “treated like trash”. He referred to Mr. Mzamane’s focus on apartheid’s physical brutality when he said that he learned in history class “how White people were beating Black people”. This was in stark contrast to Esther, whose teacher never mentioned the physical brutality of apartheid, and who subsequently downplayed the violence of apartheid by comparing it to the “mass killings” of the Holocaust. However it was also in contrast to Aphiwe, whose teacher referred to the violence of mass shootings, but not to the daily routinized violence of apartheid that Mr. Mzamane described.

Khwezi constructed robust structural legacies of apartheid. He clearly articulated his understanding that racism holds Black people back, and of how White people’s amassed wealth meant that “Black people don’t stand a chance”. Khwezi understood crime to be a consequence of poverty, and poverty to be a result of having one’s land stolen by White people. He argued, for example, that “apartheid is still alive” because Black people are unemployed, but hardly any White people are unemployed. In this regard Khwezi challenged his classmates who argued that Black people were poor because they made bad decisions. Although Khwezi did not absolve Black people of all agency or responsibility, he clearly felt that their lives would have been better if apartheid had never happened.

The structure versus agency question was also present in Atif’s discussion of Black and Coloured unemployment levels. When asked why there were such high levels of unemployment, Atif did not reference historical factors like Khwezi did. Yet, he also did not reference “Black dominance” as his classmate Candice did. Instead he attributed unemployment to drug abuse, to not understanding the

schoolwork, to dropping out of school, and to peer pressure. He placed responsibility at the level of the individual.

Atif furthermore attributed the prevalence of crime not to historical factors, as Aphiwe did, but rather to a lack of law and order. Atif argued that under apartheid there was a strong police presence but now the police did not come when there was a shooting because they were scared. Interestingly, this analysis of why crime increased after the end of apartheid was very similar not only to his classmates, but also to Saara who blamed the criminal justice system for the increase of gang violence.

While Atif did believe that on balance life was better today than under apartheid – since the “struggle against apartheid gave us our rights today” – he framed this within a context of the “pros and cons” of post-apartheid South Africa. This framing was reflective of the conversations that took place in his history class; his classmates argued that life was better under apartheid and Mr. Lembe – in an attempt to encourage discussion – gave opportunities for the students to explain why. Yet this was in stark contrast to the Black students at Southgate High, Stamford High, or Thokozani High, none of whom even considered the possibility that life might be preferable under apartheid.

Atif was also less comfortable than Khwezi or Aphiwe in attributing his own life circumstances to the influence of apartheid. Legacies of apartheid, he claimed, included poverty, fighting for the land, and the continuing abuse of basic human rights. However as an individual he didn’t think that apartheid affected him. Rather, he pointed to the opportunities that he had in consequence of his academic and sporting prowess, as well as to the ways in which his life was different from his grandparents. Atif positioned himself as someone who had overcome the past, thanks to the sacrifices of the older generation.

This narrative of overcoming the past to enjoy post-apartheid freedoms was similar to the one used by Mr. Lembe when he tried to convince his students that life was better under democracy; “Under apartheid you couldn’t just walk out wherever you wanted to go, you couldn’t go to any school. You’d have to go

to a Coloured school like John May, not a White school like Highgate. And you couldn't go to UCT, you'd have to go to UWC." Yet Atif faced the same tension that Mr. Lembe faced, when he then acknowledged that it was still only White people who sent their children to Highgate "because they have the economic means". Despite his academic and sporting prowess, Atif was still at "a Coloured school like John May".

In contrast, Aphiwe – like his classmate Saara – showed a remarkable comfort with describing all aspects of his life and contemporary South Africa as being a consequence of apartheid. For example, he attributed the large number of Black single mothers to "those closed compounds, when Black fathers had to move to town to find work, leaving the mothers and children behind." He attributed contemporary gang violence to a lack of affirmative action for Coloured people who were affected by apartheid, yet who were deemed to not have suffered as much as Black people. He attributed racially segregated neighborhoods to the Group Areas Act. He attributed his family's poverty to land that was stolen from his grandfather, and the lack of education available to his mother.

At times Aphiwe risked over-attributing the present to the past. For example, he explained that SASSA²⁴ grants are given to elderly Black and Coloured people, since they did not have good education or opportunities under apartheid. In reality however, the SASSA grants are given to all elderly people, regardless of race, who fall below a minimum income threshold. Yet this willingness to construct historical legacies to explain contemporary South Africa was reflective of Mr. Richardson's teaching style which placed great emphasis on historical causation.

Interestingly however, Aphiwe was very aware of how he was likely to overcome these perceived historical barriers. For example, he explained that since Black people couldn't access a good quality education under apartheid, he will be one of the first in his family to graduate from university. Likewise,

²⁴ The South African Social Security Agency

although the Group Areas Act meant that Black people could not live in well-resourced neighborhoods, his generation would be different:

“It’s because of the Acts of apartheid and it’s already tough on us, it’s already tough to go and stay in those areas, because it’s expensive. And plus, the education that our grandparents received. And maybe our generation, my generation, will maybe be able to afford staying there now, since more of us now are going to university.”

Since Aphiwe constructed historical explanations for why Black people like him still lived in under-resourced communities. He used these explanations to map out a path towards living in an historically White neighborhood. He was very conscious of the role that education would play in this path, since he believed it was a lack of education that held back his grandparents. This analysis was reinforced by an academically high-achieving school which emphasized the importance of education. Aphiwe believed that education was a tool he could use to dismantle legacies of apartheid; “Education can get us from a tough situation to a good paradise,” he would tell me. Since Aphiwe had the tools to dismantle what he understood to be the effects of apartheid, constructing robust legacies was neither threatening nor disempowering.

Atif however did not have those tools so readily available. He was a high-achieving student, yet he attended a school with little experience of sending students to university. If his life chances were defined by the structural poverty caused by apartheid, there was no clear path to success. Individual responsibility however was a more empowering framework than historical legacies. Atif seemed to acknowledge that the ahistorical framework he used to understand his life was indeed a choice. While he believed that apartheid affected “everyone”, it was “your choice if you want to go down that road”, rather than to think that “it’s your decisions that affect your future.”

The notion of “choice” was furthered by a teacher who gave multiple, often contradictory frameworks for understanding one’s life circumstances. Although Mr. Lembe spoke about the negative impact of

apartheid on South African society, this message was undermined both by lessons on how “we hold ourselves back”, and statements which foregrounded the ways in which South Africa had overcome the difficulties of the past.

History class did not provide Atif with clear legacy constructions - antecedents, mechanisms, outcomes - which he could easily access to explain his life circumstances. Instead, Atif drew upon different narratives at the same time. He believed his life was better than his grandparents because of the sacrifices they made. However, he also believed that he could not attend an historically White school because the under-resourced education of his parents' generation meant that he could only afford a Coloured school. Yet he felt that success was in his control if he kept up with his schoolwork and stayed away from drugs.

Once again, the comparison of these four students shows the complex ways in which students construct historical legacies to make sense of their pasts, their presents, and their futures. It furthermore highlights how the history taught at school rubs up against the history that is discussed in families and communities, to produce diverse historical interpretations. Ultimately however, these comparisons of Black and Coloured students across the four schools demonstrates the way in which history education does influence students' legacy constructions, even if it does not determine them. We should greet this as a positive finding, since it suggests that history education does have the potential for a positive impact on transitional justice.

Lastly these comparisons of students reinforce the importance of ethnographic research in this field. As has been demonstrated, students entertain diverse and often conflicting legacy constructions. These findings support those of Wertsch (1997) who argued that in some cases individuals may master historical narratives that they do not accept as their own better than those which they have appropriated. An ethnographic approach, which engages with students in a variety of contexts, is better placed to understand which historical legacies students construct as legitimate and reasonable.

Part Two: Factors that mediate the construction of legacies in the classroom

As Part One has suggested, the background and experiences of the teacher and students shape the way in which historical legacies are negotiated and constructed in the classroom. In Part Two I discuss specific factors that mediate the construction of historical legacies. Drawing on the data presented in the previous four chapters, I reflect on the influence of racial identity, family histories, social mobility, and emotional needs.

Racial identity

Race continues to be a strong marker of identity in South Africa and inevitably positions people and communities in different relationships to a past that is characterized by racial discrimination. Studies on the role of race in history classrooms suggest that racial identity is a strong mediating factor in the way in which history is taught and learned. Epstein (Epstein, 2009), for example, shows that Black and White students who attend the same history classes in the USA believe and accept different historical narratives. Angier (Angier, 2017) demonstrated how Black and White students in South Africa develop historical consciousness differently. Dryden (Dryden, 1999) writes about the ways in which White teachers teach history to “neutralize” causal connection between the past and the present, while Black teachers emphasize temporal causal connections.

The data presented in this dissertation support many of these findings. Mr. Mzamane, for example, spoke about apartheid brutality. This reflected his experience of physical violence as a Black man living under apartheid. Mr. Cilliers, in contrast, drew upon his experiences of anti-apartheid resistance which consisted of writing pamphlets and attending meetings. For Mr. Mzamane and Mr. Lembe, it was

uncontentious to demand the return of land confiscated under apartheid, however for Mr. Cilliers and Mr. Richardson the return of land would have had material consequences for their lives.

However, the racial identity of the students was also an important consideration in how the teachers constructed historical legacies. Students brought different “interpretive frames” to the classroom, and these interpretive frames shaped the legacy constructions that they found comfortable and credible. For example, it was relatively easy for Mr. Richardson – who taught Black and Coloured students – to claim that apartheid still negatively affected South Africa. His students were eager to adopt this explanation because it resonated with their life circumstances. However Mr. Richardson was less comfortable in contradicting Ntando’s claim that Mandela was an apartheid spy. In a communication with Mr. Richardson after this classroom incident had occurred, he reflected that if Ntando had been White, Mr. Richardson “would have treated that as a bogus statement by an uninformed person”. Yet because Ntando was Black, Mr. Richardson interpreted the statement as coming from a place of justified anger and betrayal, which as a White man he could not dismiss. Had the racial demographics in the classroom been different, the historical legacies that were constructed in that space would also have been different.

In contrast, Mr. Cilliers would have found it difficult to teach the same legacy constructions as Mr. Richardson. His students, who were largely White, found legacy constructions which made moral demands on them to be controversial and divisive. The White students in his class resisted legacy constructions which made them feel guilty. When Mr. Cilliers was pushed into discussing the appropriateness of naming a school after the architect of apartheid, it was a Coloured student who instigated the conversation.

The same was true of the differences between Mr. Mzamane’s class and Mr. Lembe’s class. Both classes perceived their teachers as Black (although Mr. Lembe’s mother was Coloured), yet this perception had different connotations for the way in which history was learned. When Mr. Mzamane spoke about “us” and “we” – Black people who were victims of apartheid – the class responded positively. They were

furthermore energized when their teacher referred to his experiences under apartheid, and rallied the class with Black Power slogans.

Mr. Lembe, however, found it more difficult to engage his students in this way. The John May High class was skeptical when their teacher referred to “us” as Black, and they resisted historical narratives in which life was better for everyone in post-apartheid South Africa. Instead, they thought that life was only better for Black people who held political power and got all the jobs, but not better for the Coloured community who were suffering from violence and the high cost of living. When Mr. Lembe thought that life was better now, this could be both explained and discredited by his identity as Black. It was not only the content of the history teaching that made it lack credibility, as Epstein argued, but also the identity of the messenger. Notably, the one student that I interviewed who did agree with Mr. Lembe’s historical narrative was Atif, who also identified as Black.

The racialized cultures of the classrooms also served to silence certain students. Meena, for example, rarely spoke in Mr. Cilliers’ class and was often ignored by the other students in our focus group. However, in private she shared her family’s involvement in decolonial movements, and was knowledgeable about the resistance to apartheid. Similarly, Atif was an academically brilliant student, however he never spoke in class or contradicted his classmates’ legacy thinking. Only during a private interview did he express his views about apartheid legacies, which differed substantially from those of the more vocal students.

The racial identities represented in the classroom made certain legacy constructions easier or harder to teach. Mr. Lembe tried to teach a history that did not resonate with his students, and as a result his students disengaged from history as a subject. If Mr. Cilliers had taught history with the same emphasis on damaging apartheid legacy constructs as Mr. Richardson or Mr. Lembe did, it is possible that his class would have also disengaged. However if Mr. Richardson had taught history as Mr. Cilliers did – with so little attention given to the anti-apartheid resistance – then the Stamford High class might have

dismissed it as an incomplete or subjective history; it would not have satisfied their “interpretive frame” (Epstein, 2009, p. xviii).

The data from these four case-studies support the findings of other studies which have investigated the influence of race on historical narratives. Teeger (Teeger, 2014) for example, looked at how Black and White young professionals used history to explain crime rates in South Africa. White professionals were much more likely to evoke a “narrative rupture” between the past and the present, in ways similar to Mr. Cilliers and his White students. Black professionals, in contrast, were more likely to make reference to the lack of change between the apartheid past and the post-apartheid present as an explanation for crime.

However, these findings go a step further than other studies to also show how racial identities interact and mediate the kind of historical legacies that can be constructed and discussed safely and legitimately. This study provides rich ethnographic descriptions of the ways in which certain perspectives are silenced or delegitimized in the classroom, particularly if they are delivered by racial minorities. The mechanisms by which race – or any historically polarized identity – mediated how legacy constructs are learned is a key contribution to the field of history education and transitional justice.

Family histories

The histories that were shared with the students by their families also had an impact on the historical legacies that they learned to construct. At times these family histories overruled the history that was taught in class, but often there was a more nuanced engagement between the two.

Among the twenty students interviewed for this study, there was great diversity both in how much students spoke to their parents about the past, and the nature of those conversations. Without exception, the White students from Southgate High reported that they never spoke about apartheid history with their parents, since this was something they were expected to learn about in school. Candice and Kim from John May High were actively discouraged by their families from thinking about politics or the past. In

contrast, Meena, Saara, and Atif were very well informed about the role their families played in apartheid resistance. Thandiwe, Dumisa, and Khwezi were similarly informed about how their families had suffered under apartheid.

The role that families played under apartheid shaped the legacy constructions that the students found comfortable. Kim and Candice, whose parents had not been involved in the apartheid resistance, resisted narratives in which apartheid was bad. Macie, whose father had fought against the ANC yet whose older sister advocated for anti-racism, found it uncomfortable to express strong views about apartheid legacies. Meena, however, whose father had witnessed the Trojan Horse Incident²⁵, corrected her classmates when they claimed that apartheid didn't kill anyone. Saara, whose family had their jewelry shop confiscated under apartheid, and Deborah whose grandfather could not afford to retire, were very receptive to Mr. Richardson's explanation of intergenerational poverty. Atif, whose grandfather had been actively involved in apartheid resistance, was equally receptive to Mr. Lembe's lessons on the hardships of apartheid.

However, it was also likely that what students learned in class shaped the way in which they engaged with their family histories. Mr. Mzamane, for example, spoke extensively about the brutality of apartheid. His students similarly spoke about their parents' experience of physical violence. Mr. Richardson however taught that apartheid had structural legacies, and his students spoke about the ways in which their families had been disenfranchised of land, homes, and businesses. Mr. Cilliers spoke about the how people had overcome the horrors of apartheid to do "great things", and this was reflected in Meena's comment that her parents were better off as a result of apartheid because the experience had made them stronger. It is therefore important to consider the possibility of a two-way interaction between history teaching and family histories.

²⁵ An incident in 1985 in which security forces shot and killed three young people who were part of anti-government demonstrations.

There were also occasions when students actively resisted their family narratives. Interestingly, this was particularly true of Stamford High students. Aphiwe, for example, was surprised when his mother commented that a school's quality had reduced because they hired a Black principal. Michelle similarly felt uncomfortable when her mother noted that her boyfriend was White. Amir decided to ignore his mother's advice that he should only be friends with people from his own race. These parental attitudes were not related to history per se, but the students did use history to challenge or contextualize their parents. For example, they referred to racist attitudes as "apartheid brain" and claimed that their parents thought like this because they were raised under apartheid. In doing so, these students marked themselves out as a different generation, who were not susceptible to the same historical influences.

While researchers of history education have been eager to point to the influence of the family on students' understanding of history (Epstein, 2009; Wills, 2011), these data advocate for a more nuanced approach. They suggest that the ways in which students engage in school history is not solely defined by the "interpretive frame" (Epstein, 2009, p. xviii) they inherit from their families. School history, if it offers a strong and consistent narrative, can also shape that interpretive frame. This in turn changes the ways in which students think about their family's historical narratives. However, in classrooms where discussion of historical legacies was confused or contradictory, or where the teacher was not perceived as credible, students tended to revert to the legacy constructions that they received from their families.

Social mobility

Social mobility is an aspect of students' lives that is less considered when discussing history education and legacy constructions. This is surprising since social mobility concerns, by definition, the relationship between someone's past and their present or future lives. A student who is socially mobile is able to change the circumstances of their birth to become something different. The data presented in the previous four chapters suggest that one's social mobility influences the way one looks at the past.

The students at Stamford High, for example, were highly socially mobile. They came from low-income families yet were being educated at one of the top performing schools in Cape Town. They would almost certainly attend university and obtain professional employment. Their outlook on life was largely confident and hopeful.

This attitude was also reflected in the way they constructed apartheid legacies. More than any other class, the Stamford High students articulated in great detail their belief that apartheid shaped contemporary South African society in ways that maintained racialized wealth inequalities. They furthermore embraced the idea that their lives would have been different – better, easier, more successful – had apartheid never happened. Yet it was easier to embrace this perspective on apartheid legacies because those legacies would not define their futures. Rather, Mr. Richardson’s students were very likely to be able to overcome the perceived structural barriers that they could so articulately describe.

The Thokozani High students, by contrast, were socially mobile but less so. They came from low-income families living in the townships, yet went to a school in the Southern Suburbs. There was a good chance that they would continue to study after Grade 12, perhaps at a TVET college if not a university. It was interesting therefore, that while they believed that apartheid had affected their lives and the lives of their families, they were less confident in this belief than the Stamford High students. Instead, narratives around individual agency and responsibility were more forcefully articulated.

The John May students were perhaps the least socially mobile in this study. Many attended the same school as their parents, and gauging from previous years very few students would go on to further study. These students – with the exception of Atif – did not identify any way in which apartheid could have influenced their lives. Indeed, they believed that South African history and politics had no relevance to them or their families. These students, who did not anticipate lives that were different from their parents, saw a limited influence of the past. Given the limitations of the student interview data from this school, it is only possible to speculate why this might be the case. I suggest that it may be that students who

have little agency in the trajectory of their lives reject legacy thinking which implies that the past has influence on their future. To embrace such legacy constructions would be to relinquish too much control over one's life.

I suggest that a focus on social mobility helps to explain data collected by Teeger (Teeger, 2014) in South Africa on how Black professionals think about the historical causes of crime. In Teeger's study, Black respondents were more likely than White respondents to argue that the country's apartheid past constitutes a legitimate and important part of the explanation for contemporary crime. This surprised Teeger who imagined that Black professionals, who have experienced dramatic upward mobility in their own lifetimes, might be invested in articulated narratives which construct a rupture between past and present. Such narratives, she suggested, would resonate well with the changes experienced in their own lives and would allow them to construct individualistic stories about their own success, based on tropes of hard work and motivation.

Yet rather than construct individualistic stories about their own success, my data suggest that upward social mobility may give young people the freedom to construct structural barriers. Since they are not confined by these structural barriers, they stop being threatening. It is the students who are unlikely to overcome the circumstances of their birth that are most likely to reject legacy constructions.

The role of social mobility in students' construction of historical legacies is under researched, however this study suggests that it may be an important factor which deserves further attention.

Emotional needs

Across the four findings chapters, legacy constructions have proven emotive among students and teachers. In Mr. Cilliers' class for example, the students became divided on the issue of how historical figures are remembered. In Mr. Richardson's class, Aphiwe caused controversy when he said that protesters at the Soweto Uprising were too young to be serious activists. Mr. Mzamane energized his

class by suggesting that apartheid laws should be reversed to punish White people in 2018. Mr. Lembe despaired when his class thought that life was better under apartheid.

That legacy constructions can be so emotive suggests that they fulfill certain emotional needs in our present; for example, the need for our society to make sense, to find meaning in suffering, or to maintain an image of ourselves as good people. In this section I look at how students used the past to make sense of their lives, how they ignored the past to prevent a rupture of their social world, or how they invented a past to explain what was otherwise inexplicable. To think about students' understandings of history in this way – as a tool which can be used – challenges the purely cognitive approach to history education which is interested in young peoples' ability to think and reason historically. It instead draws attention to the ways in which history teachers integrate – both successfully and unsuccessfully – legacy constructions into the emotional lives of their students.

Using the past to meet emotional needs

Students used the past in a variety of ways to help explain their life circumstances. As has been discussed in the preceding sections, the students at Stamford High are the most obvious example of this. The Stamford High students came from low-income families, who had nonetheless managed to secure a place for their child at a highly selective school. These students explained the poverty of their families by drawing on narratives of intergenerational poverty, which had begun when White people confiscated the land and property of Black and Coloured communities. These students imagined a prosperous past and mourned the loss of an imagined prosperous present. In doing so, they used history to retain the dignity of their parents who they positioned as being poor through no fault of their own.

The use of legacy constructions to understand their present circumstances also provided these students with a roadmap out of poverty. They understood poverty to be an historical anomaly that was being corrected now that South Africa was a democratic country. By becoming educated, the Stamford High

students believed they could reverse the tide of historic inequality. It was hugely empowering to perceive one's progress in light of this historical trajectory.

The students at the three other schools used this past in similar ways. Dumisa for example, used apartheid to explain why his mother was a domestic worker despite being "very clever". Khwezi used apartheid to explain why White people were wealthy, why Black people could not get jobs, and why there was so much crime. Esther used apartheid to explain why her parents had given her up for adoption. Atif used apartheid to explain why his parents were "sitting" with low-paid jobs and could not afford to send him to an elite school. These students did not embrace the past as the explanation for every aspect of their lives, however they did use the past in a way which provided interpretations for the decisions of their parents and communities.

While previous research has been conducted on "usable pasts" (Foster et al, 2008) the socio-cultural "outside-in" approach employed in this research offers a more detailed and nuanced understanding of how young people use the past to explain their own lives. Rather than assuming that the way students use the past is a feature of their historical thinking skills, as Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) do, this research suggests that the past is constructed and used in personal ways to create meaning. In the South African context, for example, apartheid legacies are constructed to safeguard the dignity of parents who are poor, and who may therefore have had to make difficult decisions.

Ignoring the past to meet emotional needs

At times the legacy constructions that students were asked to consider were inconvenient or emotionally uncomfortable. In these instances, students tried to silence or ignore what was being shared. This was most clearly seen at Southgate High, where students articulated in great detail the horrors of the Holocaust but chose to downplay the brutality of apartheid. Within this comparison the metric of significance became the number of people directly killed by the government. This frequent comparison

allowed students to dismiss apartheid as “not as bad” and avoid discussions about what actually did happen under apartheid.

Notably, the Southgate High students avoided conversations about the culpability of White people, about structural and racialized inequalities in South Africa, and about White people responsibilities in contemporary South Africa. By rejecting opportunities to construct contemporary legacies, the Southgate High students limited the extent to which moral demands could be made of them. Treating people kindly and respecting human rights were discussed in generalized inter-personal terms, with little robust historical context.

The violence of the anti-apartheid resistance, as well as the Black and Coloured resistance to apartheid were also avoided, despite being part of the Grade 9 curriculum. The only example of resistance that was offered to the students was that of Mr. Cilliers – their White teacher – who joined UDF meetings and printed anti-apartheid t-shirts. This sanitized form of resistance did not threaten the human rights approach advocated by Mr. Cilliers, and gave the impression that the resistance was largely led by White people who respected human rights. It ignored the importance of fatal bombing attacks in destabilizing the apartheid government, as well as the apartheid government’s fatal reprisals which targeted anti-apartheid protests. When exchange students from John May High offered “petrol bombing police stations” as an important form of resistance, this was quickly sidelined in class discussions.

By ignoring these aspects of the past, an emotionally safe legacy could be maintained: Apartheid was not that bad, White people – as a collective – could not be blamed for apartheid, and apartheid ended because South Africa realized the importance of human rights.

The same was true of some of the students at John May High. Rather than selectively ignoring aspects of the past, Kim and Candice abandoned considerations of the past altogether. According to Kim, those who took history “to the head” were likely to be made sad and angry by it. It was easier not to care, since the past was uncomfortable and not particularly useful. Their history education – which had almost

entirely ignored the history of the Coloured community – could not be used to help Kim and Candice explain what was happening in their community. Crime, poverty, and racial antagonisms were therefore explained without reference to the past.

Inventing the past to meet emotional needs

At times, the history that was being taught did not sufficiently explain the lived reality of the students. In these instances, a different past was fabricated. The clearest example of this was Ntando at Stamford High. The racialized poverty that Ntando observed was not fully explained by Mr. Richardson's narrative of intergenerational poverty. When given the opportunity, Ntando proposed his own narrative, in which Mandela was a spy working for the apartheid government. Black people remained poor because Mandela had intentionally negotiated a settlement with the apartheid government that protected the interests of White people.

This conspiracy theory appeared convoluted, but it made interpreting the present much easier. Rather than confronting the complex web of social, psychological, economic, and political reasons why Ntando still lived in an under-resourced neighborhood, it was more straightforward to lay the blame on one man's coordinated design.

An ideal past was also invented by many of the Coloured students, who argued that the laws under apartheid were better than contemporary laws at controlling crime and gang violence. Saara, for example, spoke about District Six as being a place with "no crime", and apartheid South Africa as a country with no overt corruption. The John May High students spoke about a time in which the law was respected, criminals were justly punished, and life was affordable. The construction of this past then allowed for an unfavorable comparison with the present; one in which a corrupt Black government could be blamed for the proliferation of crime and a lack of service provision in the poorest communities.

I suggest that a focus on the pasts that students invent is an area of history education and transitional justice that should be given more attention. Wills (Wills, 2011) refers to this invention of the past as “misremembering”. He suggests that we can understand the “interpretive frame” (Epstein, 2009, p. xviii) or “narrative structure” that students bring to the classroom by investigating what they misremember about history, since the history that they misremember is more likely to fit within their interpretive frame. When Ntando suggests that Mandela was an apartheid spy, as researchers we should seek to understand why this invention rather than any other is important for Ntando.

Wills (Wills, 2011) does not suggest that we should abandon history education to engage with what students bring to their study of history. However, we do need to be sensitive to the investment students may have in the tools they utilize and the pasts they construct with these tools. By making schematic narrative templates visible in the curriculum, just as making teachers and students aware of the frameworks they bring to their interpretation of history, they can then be used to “inform pedagogical strategies to reaffirm, challenge, and/or extend students’ understandings” (Epstein, 2009, p.120).

Conclusion

Historical legacies were constructed, debated, negotiated, and shared by the participants in this study in a multitude of ways. This in itself is an exciting finding. It suggests that the South African history curriculum, despite comprising a structured “master narrative” of historical events, does not result in a uniform or inevitable construction of historical legacies. Students’ legacy constructions were diverse and often conflicting. This led them to perceive the contemporary challenges that South Africa faces – gang violence, access to education, racialized poverty, and unemployment – in very different ways. I therefore suggest that history education in South Africa is likely to promote significant divides over public policy (Barton & Levstik, 2004), and may not support transitional justice in the way that many scholars expect (Keynes, 2019).

However beyond this finding of diverse legacy constructions, this study also outlines the variety of factors that contribute to how historical legacies are constructed and negotiated in the history classroom. It suggests that learning was not unidirectional. Rather the identities, experiences, and emotional needs of the students and teachers influenced the way in which legacy constructions were taught and shared. The mechanisms by which race mediated the construction of legacies was captured in rich ethnographic descriptions. These descriptions demonstrate how identities established through past injustices often seek to reinforce themselves through legacy constructions.

This study has also contributed to a literature on how students use the past. I suggest that the ethnographic approach has enabled a much deeper reflection on how students use, ignore, and invent the past to create a comfortable and meaningful interpretation of the present. Rather than treating the use of the past as an historical thinking skill, we should see it as a form of meaning making. In this regard, the absence or invention of the past takes on new significance; it is not a deficit in students' use of the past, but rather an alternative way of making sense of contemporary lives and societies.

Lastly, these data show that students are receptive to legacy constructions that are taught in history classrooms, if these constructions are presented in a clear and consistent manner. This is an important finding given the extensive research which demonstrates that students' "interpretive frameworks" of the past are heavily influenced by their families. That students are receptive to history education suggests that there is a role for history education in transitional justice.

However, teaching about legacies of historical injustices should come with caution. These data suggest that teaching about the past – even the difficult past – is rarely controversial. The difficult histories of the Holocaust or apartheid can be taught without causing any upset or disagreement in the classroom, so long as they are not taught as having any contemporary implications. However, claims concerning contemporary legacies of the past can be deeply divisive. Perhaps this is the greatest confirmation that it is the construction of historical legacies, rather than history, which post-conflict societies need to

confront to progress transitional justice. Yet it also means that including contemporary legacies of historical injustice in one's curriculum or teaching plan is likely to open wounds in countries that may have an already comfortably established historical master narrative.

The implications of addressing legacies of the past in post-conflict history curriculums will be addressed in the next and final chapter.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Introduction

The killing of George Floyd – an unarmed Black man – by a police officer in Florida sparked a wave of protests both in the United States and across the world. It reinvigorated the anti-racism movement, drawing attention to the racist and colonial legacies that still structure our social and material environment. At the University of Oxford, the Rhodes Must Fall movement – an offshoot of the 2015-2016 protests in South Africa – regained momentum. Thousands of supporters called for Oxford to reckon with its colonial heritage, when only a few years previously the movement had struggled to attract hundreds.

Accompanying this swell in anti-racist sentiment has been a renewed interest in history education. A petition to introduce more colonial history into the British history curriculum received over 260,000 signatures and was debated in the UK Parliament. In Edinburgh plaques were added to help educate the public about the historical context of problematic statues. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump accused the “far left” of introducing history lessons that encourage children to “hate our country”. The content we teach, the monuments we construct, and the holidays we celebrate are now being described as a culture war, the battle ground of which are claims regarding the legacies of the past.

South Africa in some regards has been ahead of the curve. A highly diverse society, with a long and recent past of racial injustice, it has been actively grappling with how to teach difficult history for over 25 years. Having already gone through several iterations of the history curriculum – and its own statue deplinthng – it is now once again revisiting this question as it decides whether to make history education compulsory until Grade 12. This is a challenging task for a society which demands a lot from its history

classes. As well as learning historical content knowledge and historical thinking skills, the History Curriculum Task Team advocates for a curriculum that also promotes social cohesion in a country with record levels of wealth inequality and racial mistrust.

Given this context, the findings presented in this study make a significant contribution to the way in which we think about history education in divided societies, and for transitional justice truth-telling. These findings encourage us to consider not only the historical events that are taught, or even the pedagogical tools that are used to teach them. Rather I argue that the way in which students construct historical legacies has important implications for how they think about their society and each other. Legacies of the past are therefore an important consideration when seeking to promote transitional justice. Furthermore, the way in which students think about the significance of the past is shaped by many influences, including what happens in the history classroom.

While several ethnographers have explored how students draw relationships between past and present (Teeger, 2015; Wills, 1996), a comparative study of how students learn to construct historical legacies in their history classes has never been attempted before. In this chapter I outline the key contributions that this study makes, as well as its policy implications, and future research agendas.

Overview

The chapters of this dissertation have explored the construction of historical legacies among young people in a post-conflict society. I observed every history lesson that four Grade 9 history classes attended in four different Cape Town schools. I also conducted interviews and focus groups with the teachers and students, often multiple times, in order to understand how they engaged in legacy thinking. Notably, I was interested both in how they constructed apartheid legacies, and whether they used these constructions to explain contemporary phenomena.

In this final chapter, I reflect on the central ethnographic conclusions of my research and the contribution of my work to theoretical and scholarly debates of historical legacies, history teaching, and truth telling for transitional justice in post-conflict societies. In regard to rethinking the concept of historical legacies, I argue that it is important to not think of historical legacies as “self-evident”, but rather constructed to serve the needs of the present. In regard to history teaching, I demonstrate how teacher and student identities intersect to influence constructions of historical legacies.

However, the central contribution of this research is to the field of transitional justice. Scholars of transitional justice have highlighted the importance of a shared version of the truth about the past in order to generate social cohesion (Keynes, 2019). My research problematizes this position by highlighting how – even when individuals agree on what happened in the past – their divided understandings of its legacies in the present can form barriers to social cohesion. “Truth-telling” about the “facts” of past conflict is therefore not a sufficient approach to addressing legacies of conflict.

Key Contributions

Rethinking the concept of historical legacies

In this dissertation I have problematized academic conceptualizations of historical legacies. In particular I argue that while essentialized and “self-evident” conceptualizations of historical legacies serve the political agenda of transitional justice, more sophisticated theorization is required for the field of history education. Drawing on Stoler’s work, I suggest that the “entailments” of the past are “far from given effects or fully understood facts” (Stoler, 2016, p. 345). The relationships between the past and the present are complex, multiple, and shifting. Attempts to make meaning from these relationships are therefore necessarily selective and subjective. Legacies are never inevitable, but rather – as Weiner (Weiner, 2013) has shown – they are culturally constructed and deployed to do work in the present.

Understanding legacies as social constructs, developed in conversation with questions and concerns in the present, is an exciting and challenging development in the field of history education. It suggests that how students draw on the past to explain the present is not solely a reflection of their historical thinking skills. Rather, this dissertation suggests that research such as that conducted by Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) could be helpfully developed through an investigation of the socio-cultural factors that shape students' legacy thinking. Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) argued that the failure to use the past to explain the present was evidence of students' poor historical thinking skills. In contrast, my dissertation demonstrates that there are socio-cultural reasons why students may not use history in certain ways, even when their historical thinking skills are well developed. While Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) take an "inside out" (Epstein and Peck, 2018) approach, this dissertation demonstrates what an "outside in" approach may offer in the post-conflict context.

Conceptualizing legacies in this way also resulted in innovative methodological approaches to researching history education in post-conflict societies. The ethnographic lens enabled close attention to how legacies were constructed, in negotiation with a range of mediating factors. I furthermore drew on Wittenberg's (Wittenberg, 2015) work to deconstruct and help identify the definitive components of legacy-type arguments, which included an "antecedent", an "outcome", and a "mechanism". Using this framework not only allowed me to identify when my participants were engaged in legacy thinking, but helped analyze and compare the content and causal logic of legacies they were constructing.

This dissertation demonstrated not only that Grade 9 students constructed legacies in a diversity of ways, but also how students learned to construct legacies in the context of their history classrooms. For example, some students felt that apartheid had no significance for contemporary South Africa, and believed that their lives were not influenced by this past. They eschewed any construction of historical legacies. Others articulated every aspect of their lives as being a consequence of apartheid, and imagined a radically different South Africa if apartheid had not occurred. They constructed all contemporary phenomena as "outcomes".

In regard to explaining some of the most pertinent issues facing South Africa – gang violence, access to education, racialized poverty, and unemployment – students also differed considerably in their use of legacy thinking. Poverty, for example, was explained both as a legacy of the historic disenfranchisement of Black people, as well as Black peoples’ lack of responsibility. Unemployment among Black and Coloured students could be attributed both to legacies of Bantu education, and to drug use.

In some instances, students constructed the same phenomena as “outcomes” and “antecedents”, but connected them with different mechanisms. Gang violence for example, was explained as being caused both by the trauma caused by apartheid, as well as by the lack of discipline that occurred in the absence of apartheid. Affirmative action for university admissions was considered both as a way of addressing perceived injustices of the past, and an attempt to repeat the past. I developed Wittenberg’s (Wittenberg, 2015) conceptualization of legacies as an important analytical tool to understand the subtle differences in the ways in which students used the past, and engaged in causal reasoning. In taking his approach forward in this way, the analysis was able to capture not only whether students used the past, but how they used it.

Crucially, the difference in legacy thinking among students could not be explained by differences in their historical thinking skills. Rather, these legacy constructs were clearly shaped by students’ identities and backgrounds. Race was an important factor mediating how students constructed legacies of apartheid. The White students in this study were more likely to think that apartheid had no contemporary legacies, or that apartheid’s legacies were a matter of perspective or feeling. By contrast, the Black students in this study were more likely to claim that legacies of apartheid were structural, and had strong influence on their lives and life chances. Similarly, the students in this study who enjoyed the most upward social mobility were more likely to construct robust apartheid legacies, whereas the students in this study who enjoyed least upward social mobility tended to reject the claim of historical influence.

This is an important finding since it supports the value of an “outside in” approach to studying the construction of historical legacies, and the ways in which students make use of the past. It demonstrates that legacy thinking is not simply “based on evidence and rational thought” (Epstein and Peck, 2018, p. 2), but rather is highly political and influenced by a range of socio-cultural factors. In post-conflict societies such as South Africa, the divisions of the past are likely to be reflected in the diverse historical legacies that are constructed, shared and contested.

New insights into the teaching of history

The South African Grade 9 history curriculum is often criticized as being too prescribed. According to Wassermann (Wassermann, 2018) it effectively provides a “blow by blow” account of what transpired in South Africa from the 1960s up to the first democratic elections. Although there are a range of accredited history textbooks that schools can choose to use, all of the schools in my sample chose the same history textbook. The historical content that the students from the four schools were learning was therefore relatively standardized. Notably however, the curriculum did not include any discussion of apartheid legacies.

Although the historical content was standardized, the research presented in this dissertation demonstrates the diversity of ways in which historical legacies were constructed by the teachers. While Mr. Cilliers described apartheid as being far in the past with few implications for contemporary South Africa – what Teeger (Teeger, 2014) refers to as a “narrative logic of rupture” – Mr. Lembe spoke about apartheid as though it was part of the recent past, having direct consequences for those they taught. Mr. Cilliers emphasized the personal moral lessons that he believed students should draw from the apartheid past, while Mr. Richardson claimed that apartheid had structural economic legacies. Mr. Lembe and Mr. Mbathane referred briefly to historical “antecedents” and contemporary “outcomes”, while Mr. Richardson described in detail the causal “mechanisms”.

This finding suggests that the South African curriculum is not as standardized or prescribed as commonly thought. Is it a misleading comparison to only look at the historical content that is taught, rather than also considering the ways in which that historical content is connected to the present? Since teachers are not guided as to how to teach apartheid legacies, arguably the most political aspect of history education is left to individual discretion.

This dissertation furthermore described the ways in which students influence history teaching. At times teachers were constrained by their students. Certain historical topics, particularly those relating to legacies of the past, were considered controversial or disagreeable by different groups of students. For example, many Southgate High students were upset at the accusation that a school name could be racist, while Stamford High students were upset at the suggestion that Hector Peterson was politically naïve.

Topics which were controversial often resulted in interpersonal tensions among the students and required sensitivity on behalf of the teacher. These interactions took time and emotional energy, so teachers tended to avoid them. The desire to avoid difficult history meant that discussion in each classroom was different, since what the Southgate High students found controversial was often very different to what the Stamford High students found controversial. To teach history by evoking the same legacy constructions would have resulted in different opportunity costs for each classroom.

This finding builds upon Teeger's (Teeger, 2015) study of two mixed-race history classrooms in Johannesburg. Teachers taught "both sides of the story" and drew moral equivalence between White and Black people under apartheid, in order to temper any disagreements among the students. On one occasion however, the students resisted this moral equivalence and the teacher lost control of the classroom. Teachers therefore found themselves engaged in a careful balance of control and credibility, and what was taught in the history class was altered accordingly.

Teachers also had to respond to legacy constructions that the students introduced to the classroom. To not respond to students' opinions would have undermined the credibility of the teacher. Mr. Lembe for

example, was upset that many of his students believed that life was better under apartheid. However he addressed and validated these opinions in order to promote discussion in the classroom. When Atif then discussed legacies of apartheid during our interview, he referenced the belief that life was better under apartheid – even though he disagreed with it – since that belief had been given such prominence in the classroom.

Students' agency raises questions about the experiences of racial minority students. Regardless of the views or values of their history teacher, classmates influence the legacy constructions that come to be considered mainstream or legitimate. It is therefore possible – as in the cases of Esther, Meena and Atif – that students find themselves alienated from their history classes; the narratives that are foregrounded in school do not explain their experiences, yet they are offered no alternative narratives. Their experiences therefore remain un-historicized.

Lastly, this dissertation engages with literature which suggests that mainstream history education has little influence on how students think about the past. Much has been written about the influence of race on how students learn history. In the USA context Epstein (Epstein, 2009) demonstrated how Black and White students developed different understandings of US history, despite attending the same history classes. She argues that students bring to the classroom an “interpretive frame” (Epstein, 2009, p. xviii) which shapes the history that they accept or reject. Her research implied that history teachers have very little influence on the ways in which students think about history, particularly if the racial identity of the teacher is different from the student.

In some regards my research supports this view. It shows for example that students' identities do have an influence on the way in which they construct legacies of the past. White students are more likely to think that apartheid does not have contemporary legacies, while Coloured students are more likely to think that life under apartheid was better than now. It furthermore suggests that race contributes to how credible the students find the teacher. Mr. Richardson's students found him credible because he offered

a “White” perspective on history that they did not otherwise have access to. Mr. Lembe’s students dismissed his opinions, most likely because they perceived him as Black.

However, my research also challenges Epstein’s work by providing a more nuanced account of the influence of the history teacher. The data suggest that while students are exposed to various legacy constructions within their families and communities, history teachers do shape legacy thinking, and can help develop the interpretive frameworks for students to articulate this thinking. If, for example, teachers construct robust and detailed legacies from the history they teach, then students can adapt these constructions to articulate the influence of legacies on their own lives. Yet even if students believe that the past has an impact on the present, they struggle to articulate this significance if their teacher has not developed an interpretive frame that connects the past and the present.

Equally, teachers that foregrounded students’ personal responsibilities for their own lives undermined messaging around the impact of apartheid legacies on personal life chances. Instead their students were more likely to attribute poverty and crime to poor personal decision making. Likewise, teachers who foregrounded the emotional trauma of apartheid had students who constructed legacies of the past largely in terms of how people felt. Whereas teachers who foregrounded the racial antagonism of apartheid had students who believed the solution to apartheid was reengineering race relations.

Most interesting were students whose families constructed apartheid legacies in ways that were different to how apartheid legacies were commonly constructed in the classroom. Meena’s family spoke frequently about apartheid and the effects they believed it had on their lives. However, Meena’s teacher and classmates were reluctant to attribute present circumstances to past events. Meena combined these two narratives; she attributed problems within South African society to apartheid, but not her own personal circumstances. Saara similarly was told by her family that life was better under apartheid, but told by her teacher that South Africa was still struggling with the damaging legacies of apartheid. Saara managed to hold both positions, explaining that apartheid laws had disenfranchised her family while

also complaining that apartheid laws were better than now. The teacher and the classroom environment clearly did influence these students.

These findings offer nuance to previous studies of history education in post-conflict or divided societies. My research suggests that teachers – even when following the same curriculum – can offer very different constructed interpretations of how the past affects the present. Sometimes these differences reflect the teachers’ own beliefs and values, but often the history education is mediated by the students. Finally, my research demonstrates that teachers and school environments do have an influence on how students construct, articulate, and deploy historical legacies. While this influence is mediated by the relationship between the teacher and students, rarely did students in this study completely disregard what they learned in school.

This is an original contribution to the field of history education. Previous studies have hinted that historical legacies may be constructed differently in different post-conflict history classrooms. However, this is the first comparative study focusing specifically on how the history classroom influences these constructions.

Transitional Justice

This dissertation makes an important contribution to the study of transitional justice, and the role of history education in addressing legacies of past injustices. It suggests that historical “truth-telling” is not sufficient, if by truth-telling is meant only the details of past injustices. Rather, what is required is a focus on how historical legacies are constructed, and the ways in which the past shapes contemporary society.

The students in this study interpreted contemporary society in very different ways. Some students constructed connections between past and present to explain why there was poverty, unemployment, and violence in contemporary South Africa. Others placed emphasis on individual agency, on the

contemporary South African government, or on contemporary attitudes to explain South Africa's problems. At times there was heated debate as to which explanation to use; could feelings of exclusion at Southgate High for example, be legitimately attributed to apartheid?

White students – such as those at Southgate High – who had been taught by their history classes that apartheid's main legacies were racist attitudes, were least likely to think that past injustice caused contemporary problems. Black students – such as those at Stamford High – who had been taught in great detail that apartheid had many structural legacies, were most likely to think that past injustice caused contemporary problems. Students from these two different schools – should they ever meet – were unlikely to reach consensus on how to solve contemporary problems. Despite agreeing on the substantive details of what happened during apartheid, they were interpreting their lived reality in very different ways.

This is particularly important in the South African context, as it suggests that major policy decisions are likely to be sources of racial tension. The issue of positive discrimination in regard to university access for example, was viewed by the White students in this study as being a form of reverse racism. They did not perceive it within a framework of transitional justice, since they did not see education inequality as being a legacy of apartheid. In contrast, a number of Thokozani High students strongly advocated for land redistribution, since they interpreted their entrenched poverty as a direct consequence of apartheid land policies.

Addressing legacies of historical injustices in a way that promotes social cohesion is central to the aims of transitional justice, yet it requires consensus on how those legacies should be constructed. The four schools in Cape Town that were the focus of this study are situated within 3km of each other. Despite their geographical proximity, the students in these schools learned to construct legacies of apartheid in very different and racialized ways. These findings suggest that history education in South Africa may not fully support the aims of transitional justice, despite a curriculum which addresses historical

injustices. This is particularly the case given that schools in South Africa are still to a large degree racially and economically segregated. Students are likely to be studying with those who have had similar experiences and upbringings; who have learned to construct historical legacies in similar ways.

In some regards these findings validate the fears of those who are critical of history education in settler colonial societies. Scholars such as Keynes (Keynes, 2019) and Miles (Forthcoming) are concerned that the structure of historical “truth-telling” serves to neutralize the history of injustices. They suggest that mainstream history curricula – in the case of Australia and Canada – undermine indigenous community demands to address legacies of the past. That the White students in this study did not perceive apartheid as having damaging contemporary legacies that needed to be addressed adds weight to these concerns.

However, my research also offers a powerful approach for understanding and addressing these concerns. As will be elaborated in the policy recommendations below, a direct approach to studying how historical legacies are being constructed in the classroom offers invaluable insight into how young people think about the past. These insights will be important as those who work in the field of transitional justice seek to improve history education for this purpose.

Methodological Implications

The ethnographic approach taken in this dissertation has a number of important implications for the study of history education in historically divided societies.

Most notably, the ethnographic approach enabled a study of how students engage with various historical legacy constructions. It demonstrated that students are often offered competing constructions of historical legacies, and that in negotiation with their peers, families, and teachers, they reach conclusions that serve their needs. Legacy constructions are not unilaterally communicated and absorbed, but can instead be deeply – albeit quietly – contested.

By being in the classroom, and by interviewing the same students multiple times over the course of the year, I was able to capture the subtle ways in which students engaged with legacy constructs. I was furthermore able to show how legacy thinking was employed strategically in order to maintain interpersonal unity or establish identity. This is particularly important in divided societies where how people engage with the past can be controversial, and deeply implicated in community loyalties.

The comparative element of this methodological approach was innovative. While other scholars (Teeger, 2015; Wills, 1996) have conducted ethnographic studies of how the impacts of the past are taught and negotiated, this is the first comparative study of its kind. Through a comparison of four different schools and classrooms – each with different racial demographics – I was able to demonstrate how legacies were constructed in different ways. In particular, I was able to show how identity and upbringing mediated the historical legacies that students constructed and found useful. The comparative element was important since it strengthened the contribution of this research to the field of transitional justice; it suggests that historical divisions are reinforced in the classroom context, rather than mitigated.

This methodological approach is an important addition to Foster et al (Foster et al, 2008) and Duquette's (Duquette, 2012) work. These scholars have also investigated how young people use the past to explain contemporary society. They conducted these investigations through interviews and questionnaires, framing students' use of the past as evidence of their historical thinking skills. This approach did not allow either scholar to consider the socio-cultural factors that might influence how a young person uses the past. As Foster et al (Foster et al, 2016) later reflected, qualitative research which critically considers the socially situated and context dependent way in which historical meaning is made is hugely beneficial to the field. They go on to note that "not enough is currently known about a range of issues central to understanding how students encounter and make sense of the past" and that ethnographic observations, in-depth interviewing and classroom case studies might "examine the influence of ethnicity, religion, identity, and community" (Foster et al, 2016, p. 221). Only through an ethnographic approach, such as

the one used in this dissertation, can we understand the nuanced ways that culture and experience mediate historical thinking.

Policy Implications

The current South African history curriculum offers a “blow by blow” (Wassermann, 2017, p. 63) account of what transpired under apartheid. However, the curriculum does not address the issue of apartheid legacies. Students are never required to consider what meanings or implications history has for their lives or for contemporary South African society.

The research presented in this dissertation demonstrates that teachers and students do have opinions about historical legacies, and these views are being constructed, implied, shared and debated within the history classroom. Moreover, in the absence of any curricular guidance on how apartheid legacies should be taught, teachers and students are arriving at radically different conclusions about legacies of the past. This poses a challenge to transitional justice which is a process that aims to address legacies of historical injustice. Since history education does not seem to contribute to a unified understanding of what legacies of apartheid are, calls for transitional justice in South Africa are likely to undermine social cohesion.

This research therefore suggests that a history curriculum that is interested in promoting transitional justice and social cohesion must grapple more directly with how legacies are constructed, rather than assume that legacies of the past are obvious if the events are taught consistently. A curricular focus on legacies of the past does not assume that a single understanding must be presented. Rather, history curriculums must offer space both to consider the different ways in which historical legacies are understood, as well as to consider the material implications of the past on contemporary society.

The findings from this research also suggest that discussions around historical legacies can be deeply controversial and divisive. While teaching about historical events is largely unproblematic, discussions of how these events implicate our contemporary society, identity, and decision making evoke strong

emotional responses. In part, the emotional responses from students police the ways in which history teachers construct legacies of the past. A history curriculum which foregrounds legacy thinking will need to be accompanied by support for teachers which equips them to handle the difficult conversations that arise.

Future Directions of Research

The research has explored the ways in which students learn to construct historical legacies. The purpose of this research was to investigate why South Africa students who study the same history curriculum leave secondary school with very different understandings of apartheid legacies. This line of inquiry was important, since it is the contested legacies of the past that lie at the heart of so many of South Africa's contemporary challenges, not least of which is social cohesion.

This research has illustrated the ways in which history education can shape students' understanding of historical legacies. However, future research could take two directions:

- 1) Future research could further explore the link between students' understandings of historical legacies and students' social and political attitudes. As students mature I suggest that future research could investigate their voting habits and policy preferences, particularly in relation to affirmative action and land redistribution which speak directly to legacy debates in South Africa. In particular, I would like to investigate how different voting demographics construct – or reject – historical legacies to support their positions. This research agenda would also be of interest in countries such as the UK and the USA; how do voting habits intersect with attitudes towards colonial legacies?
- 2) Alternatively, future research could return to the history classroom in an effort to develop and trial a history curriculum that more directly engages with and challenges students' legacy thinking. This approach could help further our understanding of what constitutes “difficult

history”, by investigating how different approaches to teaching legacy constructions are received in different classrooms. It would also be useful in understanding how best to prepare teachers for post-conflict history classrooms.

The purpose of history education is not to create citizens with homogenous beliefs or political outlooks. However in a post-conflict society such as South Africa, grappling with the past means understanding both why the past was significant, and how other people experience it as significant. Without this understanding key decisions are likely to remain divisive and polarizing.

My dissertation, as a situated account of the teachers and students in four history classrooms, is an analytically generative addition to scholarship on transitional justice and history education in post-conflict societies.

Appendix 1: Student Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me anything about your family background?
2. What do you know about your family history?
3. What are the history topics that you've studied up until this point?
4. Of all the history topics you have studied, which topics did you find most interesting?
5. Of all the history topics you have studied, which topics did you find most relevant to your life?
6. Do your classmates find the same topics interesting and relevant?
7. Why do you think these topics were included in the history curriculum?
8. Can you think of any ways that your history class has shaped the way you view the world?

Appendix 2: Grade 9 South African History Curriculum

GRADE 9: SENIOR PHASE HISTORY TERM 1	
Topic: World War II (1919 - 1945)	Suggested contact time: One term/ 15 hours
This content must be integrated with the historical aims and skills and the associated concepts listed in Section 2	
Focus: Why the Weimar Republic failed as a democracy, the rise of Nazi Germany, the outbreak of World War II in Europe and in the Pacific and people's experiences. Content and concepts • The rise of Nazi Germany 5 hours - End of World War I; Weimar Republic; Treaty of Versailles 1919 and brief summary of German punishments - Hitler and the Nazis 1920s - The Great Depression of 1929 and effects on Germany - Failure of democracy in the Weimar Republic - Reasons for public support for Nazi Party and the 1932 and 1933 elections - Enabling Act 1933 and dictatorship (including concentration camps for opponents) - Nuremberg Laws and loss of basic rights of Jewish people 1935 - Persecution of political opponents; Jehovah's Witnesses; Roma (gypsies); homosexuals; Slavs; black people; disabled people - Nazi Germany as an example of a fascist state (compared with democracy) • World War II: Europe 5 hours - Nazi's aggressive, expansionist foreign policy for lebensraum (very briefly) - Outbreak of World War II: Axis vs. Allies - Extermination camps and genocide, the Holocaust, and the 'Final Solution' - Examples of resistance to Nazism in Germany - o Sophie Scholl and the White Rose Movement - o Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church - o Warsaw Ghetto Uprising - End of World War II in Europe • World War II in the Pacific 2 hours - America in the War vs. Japan: Pearl Harbour - o Japanese Americans forcibly moved into internment camps in USA - o Japanese expansion and atrocities in China - o Japanese prisoner-of-war camps for Allied soldiers • Revision, assessment (formal and informal) and feedback should take place on an ongoing basis 3 hours Learners should read and write for part of every lesson. Evidence of learner's work, including assessments, should be kept in the learner's notebook.	

GRADE 9: SENIOR PHASE HISTORY TERM 2	
Topic: The Nuclear Age and the Cold War	Suggested contact time: One term/15 hours
This content must be integrated with the historical aims and skills and the associated concepts listed in Section 2	
Focus: The change in the balance of power after World War II and rivalry between the new superpowers during the Cold War. Content and concepts • Increasing tension between the Allies after the end of World War II in Europe 2 hours - USSR (communism) vs. USA and West (capitalism) • End of World War II in the Pacific : Atomic bombs and the beginning of the Nuclear Age 2 hours - When, where, why and how did World War II come to an end? - Why did the USA drop the bombs? - Was it justified? • Definition of the superpowers and the meaning of 'Cold War' 1 hour • Areas of conflict and competition between the Superpowers in the Cold War 6 hours - Arms race - Space race - Division of Germany 1946 and the building of the Berlin Wall 1961 • The end of the Cold War 1989 1 hour - The fall of the Berlin Wall 1989 - The fall of the Soviet Union (very briefly) 1991 • Revision, assessment (formal and informal) and feedback should take place on an ongoing basis 3 hours Learners should read and write for part of every lesson. Evidence of learner's work, including assessments, should be kept in the learner's notebook.	

GRADE 9: SENIOR PHASE HISTORY TERM 3	
Topic: Turning points in modern South African history since 1948	Suggested contact time: One term/15 hours
This content must be integrated with the historical aims and skills and the associated concepts listed in Section 2	
Focus: Some of the key turning points in South African history, including the coming of apartheid in 1948 and non-violent resistance to apartheid in the 1950s.	
Content/concepts/skills	
• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights after World War II	1 hour
• Definition of racism - Human evolution and our common ancestry* - Apartheid and the myth of 'race'	2 hours
• 1948 National Party and Apartheid - Racial segregation before Apartheid - Main apartheid laws in broad outline - o Case study: Group Areas Act: Sophiatown forced removal - o Case study: Bantustans: Forced removal: People of Mogopa to Bophuthatswana	4 hours
• 1950s: Repression and non-violent resistance to apartheid - SACP banned - ANC programme of action - o Brief biography: Albert Luthuli, his role in the ANC and resistance to apartheid - The Defiance Campaign (including the influence of Mahatma Gandhi) - Freedom Charter and Treason Trial - Women's March - o Brief biographies: Helen Joseph and Lillian Ngoyi and their roles in resistance to apartheid	4 hours
Oral history and research project: Suggested topic: How apartheid affected people's lives and how people responded: Research any apartheid law, and interview a person who was affected by that law and determine how he or she responded.	
• Allow class time for instructions and monitoring progress of project	2 hours
Note:	
* People often ask how understanding human evolution helps us. The issue of 'race' still vexes South African society today. Scientists say that 'race' is a cultural or social construct and not a biological one. Apartheid ideology, for example, selected superficial criteria of physical appearance to create categories of people and used these to classify people into 'population groups'. The study of human evolution shows us that we share a common ancestry - we are all Africans in the sense that we all descended from ancestors who lived in Africa as recently as 100 000 years ago.	
• Revision, assessment (formal and informal) and feedback should be done on an ongoing basis	2 hours
Learners should read and write for part of every lesson.	
Evidence of learner's work, including assessments, should be kept in the learner's notebook.	

GRADE 9: SENIOR PHASE HISTORY TERM 4	
Topic: Turning points in South African history 1960, 1976 and 1990	Suggested contact time: One term/15 hours
This content must be integrated with the historical aims and skills and the associated concepts listed in Section 2	
Focus: In order to study this complex period, three key turning points have been selected. This is to allow for learners to appreciate the significance of these events in more depth. • 1960: Sharpeville massacre and Langa march 5 hours - Formation of PAC 1959 - Causes, leaders, events, short-term and longer-term consequences • 1976: Soweto uprising 5 hours - Causes, leaders, events of 16 June, spiraling events that followed throughout the country, longer-term consequences for resistance and repression • 1990: Release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of liberation movements 2 hours - Events leading to 1994 election (in broad outline) - o Internal resistance and repression 1980s - o External pressure on the apartheid regime 1980s - o End of Cold War 1990 - o Unbanning of political movements 1990 - o Release of Mandela and other political prisoners 1990 - o Negotiations and violence 1990 – 1994 - o Democratic election 1994 Note: The coming of democracy after many years of struggle is repeated in detail in Grade 12. Textbooks should cover the events listed above so that learners who do not select History in Grades 10-12 can read in more detail about South Africa's recent history. Learners should also be encouraged to read the abridged version of Nelson Mandela's autobiography, <i>The Long Walk to Freedom</i>. • Revision, assessment (formal and informal) and feedback should take place on an ongoing basis 3 hours Learners should read and write for part of every lesson. Evidence of learner's work, including assessments, should be kept in the learner's notebook.	

Appendix 3: Ethical Consent Documents

Department of Education: 15 Norham Gardens,
Oxford, OX26PY



Natasha Robinson
UK Tel: +447858347221
South African Tel: +27711459543
E-Mail: natasha.robinson@worc.ox.ac.uk

ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16

Historical narrative and the forming of identity among South African youth

Child/Young Person (or if unable, parent/researcher/teacher on their behalf) to circle all they agree with:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| • Has somebody else explained this project to you? | Yes/No |
| • Do you understand what this project is about? | Yes/No |
| • Have you asked all the questions you want? | Yes/No |
| • Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? | Yes/No |
| • Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time? | Yes/No |
| • Are you happy to take part in the interview? | Yes/No |
| • Are you happy for your voice to be recorded? | Yes/No |

If **any** answers are "no" or you don't want to take part, that's OK! No one will be cross with you.

If you do want to take part, please write your name below.

Your name _____

Date _____

The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too:

Print Name _____

Sign _____

Date _____

Thank you!

Department of Education: 15 Norham Gardens,
Oxford, OX26PY



Natasha Robinson
UK Tel: +447858347221
South African Tel: +27711459543
E-Mail: natasha.robinson@worc.ox.ac.uk

Historical narrative and the forming of identity among South African youth
Primary Researcher: Natasha Robinson

OPT-OUT FORM

Ethics Approval Reference: [Insert]

If you **DO NOT** want your child to participate in the above-named research study please fill out the form below and return it to the school by 30th April 2018.

If we do not receive an opt-out form from you by 30th April 2018, your child may be invited to take part in this study, as described in the accompanying information sheet.

I, the undersigned, hereby **DO NOT** give permission for my child to take part in the questionnaire/interview (delete as appropriate) which is part of the research study titled Historical narrative and the forming of identity among South African youth.

Name of child: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Natasha Robinson
UK Tel: +447858347221
South African Tel: +27711459543
E-Mail: natasha.robinson@worc.ox.ac.uk

Historical narrative and the forming of identity among South African youth

INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11 TO 15

Ethics Approval Reference: [Insert]

We are inviting you to join in a research study. My name is Natasha Robinson and I work at the University of Oxford in the Department of Education.

Before you decide if you would like to join in, it's important to understand what the study is about, why we're doing it and what it would involve for you. Please read and think about this leaflet carefully. Please feel free to talk to your family, friends, or the researchers about it if you want.

If anything isn't clear or you have more questions you can ask your parents/carer to give us a call and we can discuss it with you and your parents/carer.

Why are we doing this research?

In this research study I am interested in understanding your experiences of history classes, and your opinions about South African history and society. By understanding the experiences and opinions of many different students in Cape Town I am hoping that we can help to improve education in South Africa.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We are inviting you to take part because you are a young person, in a high school in South Africa who is studying history. We are inviting 120 young people to take part.

Do I have to take part?

No - It is up to you. We will ask you to sign a form to say whether you want to take part. We will give you a copy of this information sheet and your signed form to keep. If you want to take part but then change your mind, you are free to stop taking part at any time during the research without giving a reason, by telling the researcher. If you decide to stop, I will not use the information we have already collected from you.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you are willing to participate in this research, I may ask you to have an interview with me. This interview will last for one hour and it can be at a time that is convenient for you. I will audio record the interview using a Dictaphone. The interview will take place at your school; however, the interview will be confidential. This means that I will not share what you say in the interview with any of your teachers, friends or parents, and nobody else will be able to listen to our conversation. In the interview I will ask you questions about your history classes, what you are learning about South African history, as well as questions about your society. In this interview there will be no right or wrong answers – this is not a test! Instead, I am interested in your experiences and opinions, whatever they might be.

I will also observe your history lessons. During these observations I will be particularly interested in how you learn about South African history and the kinds of discussions that you have in the classroom.

What happens to the results of the study?

Results for each young person taking part are kept strictly confidential. Only a number will be used to identify you, and all information and results are kept in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer in the University.

If you agree to participate in this study, the research will be written up as part of my PhD work.

We also aim to publish our findings in scientific journals, but this may be two to three years from the end of the study.

All the information that I collect will be stored for at least 3 years after it is published. Third parties may be given access to research data for monitoring and/or audit of the study, or for data storage purposes.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of taking part?

I hope that this interview will give you a valuable opportunity to reflect on your history education and to think about the ways it has influenced your world view. Although the research will take two hours of your time, I hope that it will not place too great a burden on you.

Will anyone else know I'm doing this?

We will keep your information private. The interview will be confidential. This means that I will not share what you say in the interview with any of your teachers, friends or parents, and nobody else will be able to listen to our conversation. I will anonymise all the information that you give me.

What if I don't want to take part in the research anymore?

Just tell your parents/carers and the people carrying out the research that you do not want to take part. You don't have to give a reason, and no one will be annoyed with you. It is YOUR choice.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is organised by Natasha Robinson of Oxford University, who is a PhD student. The study is being paid for by the ESRC.

Who has reviewed the study?

Before any research involving people can start, it has to be checked by a Research Ethics Committee to make sure that it is OK for the research to go ahead. This study has been approved by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

What if there is a problem or something goes wrong?

Please tell us if you are worried about any part of this study, by contacting the researcher (natasha.robinson@worc.ox.ac.uk). You may also talk to your teacher/parent/carer who will let the researcher know. If you are still unhappy or wish to make a complaint, either you or your teacher/parent(s)/carer(s) can contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (Chair, Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD).

Contact details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Natasha Robinson
Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX26PY
UK Tel: +447858347221
South African Tel: +27711459543
Email: natasha.robinson@worc.ox.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this – please ask any questions if you need to.



University of Oxford
Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Primary Investigator: Natasha Robinson
UK Tel: +44 7858347221
South African Tel: +27711459543

Mr. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] High School
16th April 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to enquire about conducting some research in your school during this academic year. I am a doctoral research student at Oxford University, supervised by Dr. David Johnson (Reader in Comparative and International Education) and funded by the ESRC. In my research project entitled *Historical narrative and the forming of identity among South African youth*, I will explore the way that students develop historical consciousness and identity in the history classroom. In keeping with UK research ethics your school's participation will be strictly confidential and anonymous. At this stage in the project I am hoping to recruit three schools to participate and your participation would be of great value to the project.

Specifically, I am asking for your participation in three aspects of data collection:

1. I wish to conduct classroom observations over a period of two semesters with the same Grade 9 history class. These observations will be entirely unobtrusive to the functioning of the class. I would prefer to observe a class in which South African history is being taught, however this is not essential. During these observations, I intent to make handwritten notes, and no student names or identities will be recorded.
2. I wish to conduct an interview with the class history teacher regarding their approach to history teaching. This interview will last no longer than one hour and can be arranged at a time of convenience for the teacher. The interview will be dependent upon the teacher's consent to participate, and the identity of the teacher will be strictly anonymised. The interview questions can be provided to you in advance of the interviews upon request.
3. I wish to conduct interviews with five students from the Grade 9 history/social studies class, regarding their history education and understanding of apartheid. The interviews will be strictly confidential and anonymous, occurring only with consent of the students and their parents. I am happy to provide a copy of the interview questions upon your request.

By participating in the research, your school would be contributing to a project that will deepen our understanding of how history education shapes young peoples' identity and historical consciousness in South Africa.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research with teachers and young people, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. Before beginning the research, I would inform parents and guardians about the research and offer the students, parents and

guardians the opportunity to refuse to participate. Throughout the research students, parents and guardians will be able to refuse to participate at any time.

All participants, including students, teacher and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor and myself, and not used other than specified without the further consent of all involved being obtained. All tapes would be destroyed at the end of the research period and kept in locked conditions until then. I have enclosed copies of the leaflets for parents and students with this letter.

If you feel you would like to take part in the study, or need more information about what is involved, please contact me. Whether or not you feel it would be appropriate for your school to participate, I would be grateful if you would complete the pro-forma below and return it to me in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed in this letter.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Natasha Robinson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Natasha Robinson



REFERENCE: 20180425-1585

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Natasha Robinson
5 Clevedon
9 Highstead Road
Rondebosch
7700

Dear Ms Natasha Robinson

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND THE FORMING OF IDENTITY AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **02 May 2018 till 28 September 2018**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 25 April 2018

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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24 January 2018

Ms Natasha Robinson
Department of Education
University of Oxford

Dear Ms Robinson,

Research Ethics Approval (CUREC 2)

Ref No: R50681/RE002

Title: Historical narrative and the forming of identity among South African youth

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to the IDREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project, which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application, you should submit details to the IDREC for consideration.

Please note that you may be required to submit an annual progress report on each anniversary of study approval, until the study is completed, and that your study may be selected for review by the SSH IDREC during an annual audit. External funders may also request ethics audits of any studies they have funded.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Claudia Kozeny-Pelling'.

Claudia Kozeny-Pelling
Research Ethics Manager and Secretary SSH IDREC

cc: Dr David Johnson, Jackie Bridges

Appendix 4: Extracts from Fieldnotes

Southgate High School

7/05/2018

The teacher doesn't want the students to stand behind their desks like they do in other classes. But the students keep forgetting to sit down and take their books out.

The teacher gives the students guidance on their essay; signpost to organize your essay, e.g. economic, political.

T: Some of you got very confused. The Weimar Republic made a number of political and economic mistakes. Is democracy good for the Weimar Republic because Hitler proposed a different types of government – a strong government. The Weimar Republic was seen as weak. Hitler showed they were strong and organized. How did they do this?

S: Organized gatherings, marches

S: Matching uniforms

S; Had logos and catch phrases

T: Showing...?

SS: Unity

S: Very organized to have posters

The teacher asks the students to comment on others answers.

T: In the introduction to need to refer to how Hitler is going to exploit the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic and the democratic government. People didn't know how democracy worked. They didn't realize that the Weimar Republic had to sign the Treaty of Versailles or the Allies would have invaded.

The Weimar Republic was under a lot of pressure. The best time to introduce democracy is when the country is stable but this was unstable. But politics is not about 'ack, shame', it's about winner takes all, it's about taking advantage. But people were patient until the turning point which many of you forgot in your essay. The 1929 depression. Like after a maths exam. That's when people in Germany needed to look for new solutions. In 1923 the USA were kind and the loaned money and the USA could make money out of it. They weren't being generous, they're making money. In 1929 the whole economic situation is in a downward spiral. People were desperate, you'd have to be to vote for the Nationalist Party. They were violent. In desperation people make desperate choices.

The teacher makes a joke about desperate students forgetting about a test.

T: Some of you didn't use statistics enough.

The teacher calls up students to give the tests back.

T: You must work harder and get yourself organised.

He gives a comment to each student who collects the test.

Students talk gently about their marks to each other.

T: "more evidence needed but getting there", "Right [REDACTED], what do you need to do?"

The teacher lost one students' script, and says he'll look for it.

T to S: Don't worry, I'll find it hey.

T: Put it in your portfolio. Some people did really good preparation and by this I mean they wrote down things that they understood. Some of you didn't use statistics and you had them available. Hitler didn't have much support until 1932. If you're worried about your result you can come and chat to me at the end.

S: In the Great Depression were people depressed or were they told there was a depression?

T: Who can answer?

S: It was the economy was depressed, so things people needed were not available.

T: Yes, which I'm sure people felt depressed because the economy collapsed and you can't put food on the table.

S: I have a question. If Hitler hadn't come to power what would Germany be like, because he did help the economy?

T: People felt they could put Hitler in power and he can take the blame and politicians thought they could control Hitler. But Hitler used the Enabling Act so he could pass decisions without Parliament because the country was in crisis. We don't have time to talk for a long time. He used the Enabling Act to ban the other political parties to put people in prison and people could have challenged him but they were put in power. It's incredible from 20-plus members in 1919, 14 years later he's a dictator. Incredible, made a result of the economic difficulties that the Weimar Republic could not address. Turn to page 9. "Regime" means rulers, people who rule you. To be a fascist government people have total control. Did the Nats under apartheid have total control?

S (Black): Yes because they told people where to live.

T: What about Black, Coloured and Indian people voting?

SS: Not allowed to vote

T: What percentage is that?

S: 80% 40%

T: About 10-15%

SS: Gasp

T: So the minority voted. How were the National Party able to control the majority? Look here, might give you some clues.

The teacher points to the sheet on Hitler, "Characteristics of a Fascist State"

S: You have to follow rules, it's the way things go

T: They didn't want people to think. But is critical thinking a good thing?

S: They saw war as natural

T: It's a bit more complex, but yes that's the general idea

S: They controlled the media

T: When did South Africa get TV?

SS: Multiple answers

T: In 1976 South Africa got TV. Because the National Party believed that they could feed people information so they would support segregation, to control minds through the media. How is that similar to Hitler?

The teacher calls on me to congratulate the students.

T: White people are superior. Is that true?

SS: NO

T: But did the Nationalists think it was true?

SS: Yes

T: Give me an example of how the Nationalists thought it was true

S (Black): They were paid more and other people had to live in poor areas.

S (Black): Certain busses

S (White): Better hospitals

T: How would you know what is a White bus?

S (Black): The quality

S (White): The size

T: It wasn't overcrowded. Each train had three separate carriages, Black, White and Coloured. They said it was first, second, and third class.

S (White): That's not very nice.

T: Apartheid is not nice. You can't say you'll discriminate in a nice way.

SS: Laugh

S: Not allowed to vote

S: They had to carry passes

08/05/18

T: [REDACTED], look at page 9. I'll give you the opportunity to do questions and I'll put you right on the spot against time. I'm impressed when someone said that in South Africa they wanted White people and everyone else to not be critical. When you are critical you criticize and what does that do? We want to find out answers to our questions. You want to see positives and negatives. And we can give constructive criticism, you give advice on how to do things better, for example, what is right with Apartheid and what is wrong with apartheid?

S: They didn't want people to question or find fault.

T: Just obey and we will tell you what's right. The government feeds you one set of views, what do we call that?

S: Propaganda

T: What do you think? Did the National Party use propaganda?

S: Yes, they did

T: give some examples from what you've heard

S: When they advertised stuff they would put subtle things to make you think a certain way.

T: If you were prime minister what would you want people to think?

S: That you would have a nice life.

T: For which group of people?

S: White people

S: It's indoctrination

T: In a Fascist state power is very important and physical strength. They wanted women to be physically fit. Why?

S: To give birth to children.

T: They wanted people to know everything about history according to the Nazi party.

S: They just taught one side of the story

T: Would they teach them the truth?

S: No

T: So they taught that they lost World War one because the Jews were traitors. In every classroom in front was a picture not of John Lennon, or a good man like Mandela, but of Hitler and every day they had to hail him.

S: So Jews were used as scapegoats

S: They also probably said that the previous government was used as scapegoats.

T: Yes, so children in South Africa, were they taught a true version of history?

S: My dad said they weren't really taught about what was happening

T: They were just taught what was in the textbook, not taught to think.

T: Physical education, you weren't doing this for you, you were doing it for the nation. You would be wearing swastikas, you'd be running, singing, absolutely pro-Nazi [REDACTED].

The teacher gives the students five minutes to answer the question: How does the poster on the right reflect Fascist characteristics?

T: This exercise gives me an idea when I mark it how well you have done. Swap your exam papers to mark them.

T: You look at the words and you're able to tell me that's Fascist thinking. That's incredible!

T: Opposition is allowed in a multi-party democracy.

The teacher is extremely encouraging when students do things correctly.

T: Freedom of speech is essential in a democracy. Critics are not put in prison. There is an independent court and parliament. In democracy human rights are important.

The teacher high-fives a student who did well.

Stamford High School

4/09/2018

T: Where is everyone else? Half the class is missing.

Students wander in in a good mood, lots of laughter. Students stand behind their desk.

T: Now you're talking, wasting my time and your time. Good morning.

SS: Morning sir

The teacher writes "passes" on the board.

T: Quickly fire off some reasons why people were angry about the passes that you can remember.

S: They got arrested if they didn't have them

T: You're disrupting my class by coming in late.

S: They had documents with their details in it.

T: What's wrong with that, I have a document.

S: But they had to present them.

S: It degraded their identity.

T: Why?

S: They were segregated according to race.

T: We talked about this last week. The pass was what, in relation to your work status?

Aphiwe: It said how many weeks they had to work.

T: To be in the city. This is key. You have to have a pass to work in the city, you have to have a job to have a pass to live in the city. So what happens when your job ends?

S: You have to leave

T: Or get a new job. So that means you have a pass on you and a cop asks for your pass and you give it to him, but he looks at it and sees that it expired two weeks ago so you have to leave. So what effects do you think the pass had on families?

S: It was hard for them.

S: It estranged families. People don't know each other anymore. The father goes away for a long time and is a different person.

T: And what about the mother?

S: She has to be the mother and the father

T: She must work and earn money. So she has to do the mother stuff but then she has to work on the farm and what if the money the father sends home isn't enough?

SS: She has to earn money.

T: Yes, she has to maybe take more work to earn an income. Passes intensified over time. First of all, only men had to have passes, then you have the women's march because the government extended the Pass Laws to women. What do you think were the consequences of women having to have a pass?

S: Children were being left alone

T: What if you're a woman and you don't have a job? Are you allowed in the city?

SS: No

T: Yes, before a woman could come and visit if they were close enough. But now they can't.

The teacher reads from the textbook.

T: Wow, we didn't think of that. You might get permission to work in a particular town but it's not the same as your husband. It just contributes to the breakdown of the family.

The teacher's voice is hoarse today so he asks the students to read the relevant bits from the textbook. Different students read different passages. A student reads from the textbook about the women's march and how they did a silent protest outside the building.

T: Do you see the bit in the textbook for further information where it says they wanted the law repealed? To do away with or to cancel legally.

A student reads about the consequences of the passes.

T: Why do you think the word "reference book" is in inverted commas?

S: It's not what pass books actually are.

T: Its sugar coated, the government here is euphemizing, making something horrible sound OK. "Oh, it's just a reference book". No, we know what it is, we've been living with passes for our husbands for years.

S: Read textbook, "to pay for our passbook is like buying slavery"

T: That's a powerful statement. Technically it's not slave labor because they will get some money but it's like slave labor. So that's what starts the Women's March. Who has heard this before? "You strike a woman and you strike a rock." What does it mean?

S: Means don't mess with women

T: Exactly. It means that if you strike it the bolder will un-lodge and it will trample everything in its path.

T: Look at the picture on page XX, what's special about this picture?

S: There's White women.

T: Exactly, there's White women and Black women and these women Helen Joseph and Lillian Ngoni are pretty famous and had a big effect on the resistance movement. And if you look at page XX you can see a description of their lives and what they went through and it's very said to see what happened to them as a result of these protests. So I want you to do Activity XX on page XX and then for homework (Groan from students) I want you to do Activity XX.

S: Sir, why would they do a silent protest?

T: That's a good question. Why do you think they did a silent protest?

S: It's non-violent

T: Good, that's a good reason. And why else?

S: Sir, it causes a disturbance because it's not what you expect, so it's quite disturbing.

T: Yes, it's disturbing, and I think it's because you expect for there to be singing or noise but instead you just have people standing there in silence.

T: They made this march to the Union Buildings to hand over these petitions, and Lillian Ngoni went into the building and knocked on XX door, and eventually his secretary came out, and she said that the minister wasn't there, but she can take the petition. But many people think the minister was hiding from the woman and it was quite embarrassing for the government. I'm handing out the rubric next week Tuesday. The whole project is due on Thursday. And your vlog is due on Tuesday. You can either give

it to me on a memory stick, email me or Whatsapp it to me. You have my email address. If you want to Whatsapp it to me come and see me and I'll give you my number.

11/09/18

Some students are already here from the last class. The teacher comes in with his laptop in his hand. A student rubs maths notes off the white board. The students stand behind their desks. The students are handing in the vlog today. They have it on their USBs. Most students are not here. They're coming from different maths classes.

T: Good morning!

Students sit down. There is light chatter.

T: Well we can't wait, let us begin. There are three things that I want to achieve. The first is that I want to mark the activity you were doing about the women's march, then I want you give you another activity, half English, half History. It's a poem that was written during that period and there's a small activity on that, and then I'll call you up to check your vlog. Remember the women were unhappy with carrying the passes. Why did the passes mean prison?

S: If you didn't have the passes you could be locked up.

T: Yes, women are saying we know this because women have husbands who have gone to prison. Why did pass laws create broken homes?

S: It separated families

T: How did it separate families?

S: It meant that families couldn't all work in the same city.

More students come in and the teacher is annoyed.

T: What I don't understand is if you are all coming from the same class, why are you all coming at different times? I think you must be walking slowly or going to your lockers. Yes, passes mean broken home because it divided families up. What does the source think will happen to the women if they have passes? The teacher reads the sources. Where will they go?

S: Jail

T: And before that?

S: The van

T: And the thing is that it's not necessarily from the van to the prison. What do I mean by that?

S: Torture

T: Yes, and why that?

S: Fear

S: People who are powerful, then it sets an example for others.

S: Get intel

T: Yes, get information. Arrest him on the basis he doesn't have a pass and then torture him. Do you think slavery is a fair comparison and why? Do you have an answer there? You need to be following me.

S: They would be arrested if they don't have a pass.

T: How does that relate to slavery?

S: Slaves were branded with a number. But the passes were like a number.

T: Good observation. It's reducing people to a number, and it's not quite as bad as branding but it's very dehumanizing. And I think the other thing is just exploitation, overworked and underpaid. It's forcing people to become dependent on their boss, the White man. It's not like picking cotton in the cotton fields for no money but it's still work for very little pay. Who is this flier aimed at and what is it trying to achieve? Zach?

S: Don't know sir.

T: Cause you're dozing off. Was it made for government?

S: No

T: Why not?

S: Because it's just not

T: I'm afraid that's not going to get you any marks in the exam. Amara?

S: To Black Africans.

S: Trying to get people to resist these laws.

T: Yes, it's a rallying cry. I don't think it's for the government. They're not going to do anything with a flier. You're very dozy today. You're not even writing this down. Jordan, you don't have your book open. Is that your history textbook? Turn to page 246 and read the poem. It's important that you know that the person called Mono is his wife. So I'm going to read the poem but I'm not going to explain anything about it. And then I want you to answer the questions. OK, so there might be 5 or 6 words that you don't know what they mean, there are dictionaries over there where you can look them up. I want

you to answer these questions and I'm going to call you up. Guys, no talking, you should be dictionaries, analyzing, onto the question.

A student doesn't have her vlog.

T: You must bring it on Thursday. This is important.

There is light talking among the students. Some are definitely not on task.

Lots of students seem not to have handed in their vlog. It's ready but they don't have it with them.

T: OK, then it's time up. If I haven't seen you then come quickly to my desk. Otherwise, good morning. Guys, listen up, it's not fair if I penalize some people who haven't handed it in. So I'm going to be here at first break, and you can give it to me then. If I don't see you then you will lose these small marks for not handing it in. Get it to me by the end of the day, otherwise if I don't see you, you will lose these marks.

S: Sir, can I have your number?

S: I will send it at 5 in the evening.

T: That's fine, so long as I get it today.

Appendix 5: Participants

Table showing the biographic data of all participants:

NAME	SCHOOL	POSITION	RACE	GENDER	AGE
DAN RICHARDSON	Stamford	Head of History	White	Male	Early 30s
AMIR	Stamford	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Male	14/15
APHIWE	Stamford	Grade 9 student	Black	Male	14/15
MICHELLE	Stamford	Grade 9 student	Black	Female	14/15
LINDA	Stamford	Grade 9 student	Black	Female	14/15
SAARA	Stamford	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Female	14/15
DEBORAH	Stamford	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Female	14/15
MR. HINTON	Stamford	Principal	White	Male	40s
ALFIE CILLIERS	Southgate	Head of History	White	Male	60s
MACIE	Southgate	Grade 9 student	White	Female	14/15
MEENA	Southgate	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Female	14/15
ESTHER	Southgate	Grade 9 student	Black	Female	14/15
ANIKA	Southgate	Grade 9 student	White	Female	14/15
ALICE	Southgate	Grade 9 student	White	Female	14/15
MR. BROOKS	Southgate	Principal	White	Male	Early 40s
SIZWE MZAMANE	Thandokhulu	History teacher	Black	Male	Late 40s
KHWEZI	Thandokhulu	Grade 9 student	Black	Male	14/15
DUMISA	Thandokhulu	Grade 9 student	Black	Male	14/15
THANDIWE	Thandokhulu	Grade 9 student	Black	Female	14/15
ANATHI	Thandokhulu	Grade 9 student	Black	Female	14/15
ZINTLE	Thandokhulu	Grade 9 student	Black	Female	14/15
SIMON LEMBE	John May	History teacher	Coloured / Black	Male	Late 40s
ATIF	John May	Grade 9 student	Black	Male	14/15
KIM	John May	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Female	14/15
CANDICE	John May	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Female	14/15
CLINT	John May	Grade 9 student	Coloured	Female	14/15
MS. ABRAHAMS	John May	Principal	Coloured	Female	50s

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