

SENSITIVE HISTORY UNDER NEGOTIATION  
PUPILS' HISTORICAL IMAGINATION AND ATTRIBUTION OF SIGNIFICANCE  
WHILE ENGAGED IN HERITAGE PROJECTS

## CHAPTER 4

### IMAGINE THE TIME OF SLAVERY AND PASS THE STORY ON:

### LEARNING ABOUT HISTORY IN A HERITAGE PROJECT ADDRESSING SLAVERY<sup>11</sup>

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the wooden walls of the exhibit ‘Break the silence’, which evokes the inside of a slave ship, an educator from the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy (*NiNsee*) tells pupils about the conditions on these ships. The pupils can hardly believe what they hear as she tells them about three months of lying in chains with people defecating and sometimes dying directly above and beside one another.

*NiNsee* and several other museums and institutions offer educational projects about the history of slavery that connect with the school history curriculum. In these projects, teaching the history of slavery is often combined with creating greater awareness and stimulating the attribution of significance to what is presented as the Dutch heritage of slavery. The educational project of *NiNsee* was studied by De Bruijn (2014) as a case study in his dissertation concerning educational resources used in heritage projects in England and the Netherlands. He described how the heritage project emphasised the perspectives of the enslaved persons and how the project stressed the importance of commemorating the legacies of this past. Over the years, scholars have criticised the ‘heritage industry’ because it primarily stimulates instrumental and mythical uses of the past for political and commercial purposes (Hewison, 1987; Lowenthal, 1998; Smith, 2006). Within the context of museums, heritage institutions, tourism and education, heritage is often used in governmental strategies for social inclusion that may not necessarily lead to the acknowledgement of diversity (Littler, 2005). When a particular heritage is claimed by a particular group, there may be a loss of multiple perspectives concerning the meaning and significance of the heritage (Smith *et al.*, 2011; Van Boxtel, 2010b). Recently, experts in

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<sup>11</sup> This chapter is based on the following article: Savenije, G.M., Van Boxtel, C. & Grever, M. (2014). Learning about sensitive history: ‘heritage’ of slavery as a resource. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 42(4), 516-547.

various disciplines have researched the role of heritage from a dynamic perspective: the study of material and immaterial traces of the past that are considered valuable for the present and the future by a particular group of people (Littler & Naidoo, 2005; Smith, 2006). This meta-perspective implies an awareness of the multi-perspective and changing character of the process of constructing heritage. In existing educational practices, however, heritage is not always approached dynamically. Teaching the history of slavery may be at odds with educational practices in which historical traces are used as an instructional resource and presented as Dutch heritage at the same time (Grever *et al.*, 2012; Hamer, 2005). In the Netherlands, historical thinking and reasoning are important objectives of the history curriculum. How are educational practices in which historical traces are presented as heritage positioned within this context?

There are various reasons for embarking on field trips and teaching history using historical traces, by which I mean ‘the use of the physical survivals of the past (buildings, historic sites, museum artefacts), as well as the non-institutionalized and less tangible (customs, folk stories, festivals, symbols and ritual)’ (Hamer, 2005, p. 159). For example, historical traces can stimulate historical empathy or imagination (Marcus *et al.*, 2012; McRaine, 2010; Spock, 2010). This imaginative engagement is particularly valuable for teaching about historical realities, such as slavery, that pupils find difficult to understand because these realities are unjust, cruel or horrible in their eyes (Davies, 2000; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2009). However, the ways in which the often multi-layered or disputed ‘heritage status’ of particular traces of the past affect the learning of history remain insufficiently studied. The history of slavery can be sensitive in an urban classroom because of its traumatic content and because pupils may identify with historical actors or respond morally to the history (Sheppard, 2010). It is to be expected that these reactions may be intensified by an encounter with the historical traces related to this history, particularly when these traces are considered to be heritage and are attributed significance by a majority, a minority or both, but in different ways. Pupils of various backgrounds may connect to the history of slavery in different ways, and these connections can emerge in the forefront when historical traces are presented as Dutch heritage. With this type of topic, which is particularly sensitive in contemporary multicultural societies, these relationships can create tension among pupils or between pupils and their teacher. However, the idea that they are studying historical traces that are considered valuable in the society in which they live can motivate pupils (Hamer, 2005). Studying heritage may also stimulate pupils’ awareness that history is built on stories that are significant to particular groups of people. This awareness can help them reflect on their own criteria for deciding what is historically significant. Currently, one of the aims of history education is to understand the ways in which history is constructed and subject to the changing viewpoints of its present creators (Seixas & Morton, 2012). However, there has been little empirical research on the practices of learning sensitive history using historical traces from a heritage approach.

A case study was conducted to explore pupils' learning of the history of slavery in an educational setting in which historical traces are presented as Dutch heritage. The previous chapter discussed the pupils' understandings of the historical significance of the heritage of slavery. In this chapter, I focus on the pupils' attribution of historical significance and their historical imagination while engaged in a heritage project addressing slavery. As I will discuss in the next section, historical imagination and historical significance are important issues in learning sensitive history. I expect that, particularly for these aspects of the learning of history, the 'effect' of using a heritage approach to the past may become evident. The research question of this chapter is as follows: *How do pupils in Dutch urban classrooms learn about the history of slavery while engaged in a heritage project that presents historical traces of slavery as Dutch heritage?* I gathered data using a combination of methods during a heritage project on the topic of slavery, which included a visit to *NiNsee* and the National Slavery Monument. The data were derived from whole-class questionnaires, individual interviews, transcribed pupil discussions and observations of three lessons.

In what follows, I will discuss the concepts central to my analysis. First, I elaborate on pupils' historical imagination and their understandings of historical significance in relation to learning sensitive history. Second, I consider the practice of using historical traces from a heritage approach and discuss the constraints and benefits of this practice when teaching the sensitive topic of the history of slavery. Then, I present the methods and results of the case study.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Pupils' Historical Imagination

In the literature addressing sensitive history, the impossibility of imagining particular past events is an important issue. Certain historical events are too horrific to envision or understand (Davies, 2000; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2009). Yet, when educators present dry facts, history may become meaningless, and people may be reduced to statistics (I. Philips, 2008). Although imagining the past is important for pupils' understanding of history, it is difficult to define what they do when performing this mental task (Egan & Judson, 2009). When learning about the past, pupils form mental images in which they try to imagine the perspectives of the historical actors figuring in the events. Generally, these mental images also have an emotional dimension (Egan, 1997). It is also argued that 'physical being-in-the-environment' is an important element of imagination (Fettes & Judson, 2010). These aspects of learning are often central to educational practices using historical traces. The pupils described in the first paragraph of this chapter were stimulated to form mental images of a slave ship and to adopt the perspective of an enslaved person in it, including a 'simulation' of the bodily experience of being in such a ship and the emotions that it would evoke.

Pupils' capacities to imagine the past and the extent to which that is desirable for learning history has been part of the debate regarding historical empathy (Lee & Shemilt, 2011). Historical empathy is seen as a complex undertaking for pupils (Lee & Ashby, 2001). One of the issues is the extent to which historical empathy is, or should be, cognitive or affective (Brooks, 2011). Together with Barton and Levstik (2004), Kohlmeier (2006), Endacott (2010), Brooks (2011) and Davison (2012), I regard historical imagination and historical empathy as both cognitive and affective processes. Cognitively, pupils consider the perspectives of historical actors in the past. Affectively, they show interest in these people, they care for them, and they react to the consequences of past events in the past and the present (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Although the affective component has been associated with sympathy or unrestrained imagination, which indeed sometimes occurs in classrooms, I believe it is neither possible nor desirable to neglect this component. This affective element of historical empathy can motivate historical inquiry (Kohlmeier, 2006). Furthermore, as argued by Gregory and Witcomb (2007) and McRaney (2010), a more embodied learning experience using all of the senses, such as exploring a historic site or object or performing role-play, may bring about new forms of historical understanding. However, pupils' affect may also impede their learning. Particularly when sensitive history is involved, there is a risk of generating strong moral responses or negative emotions, as explained in the previous chapter (Savenije, Van Boxtel & Grever, 2014; Schweber, 2004; Von Borries, 1994). Pupils may thus have difficulty contextualising particular events and the actions of historical actors or approaching historical developments from the perspectives of various historical actors. To prevent imaginative engagement from becoming too overwhelming and bringing history too close, certain authors emphasise the importance of approaching sensitive histories from multiple perspectives (Kokkinos, 2011; Schweber, 2006).

## *2.2 Pupils' Identity and their Understandings of Significance*

Another issue in teaching sensitive history is the composition of the class of pupils and their understandings of the significance of that history. Several authors have categorised the ways in which the past is attributed historical significance (Cercadillo, 2006; Lévesque, 2008; Seixas, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2012). For example, events, persons or developments can be considered to be historically significant when they 'resulted in change' or 'reveal something in the past or present' (Seixas & Morton, 2012, p. 12). Researchers emphasise that pupils in urban classrooms tell a wide variety of stories about the past and have various understandings of its historical significance (Barton & McCully, 2005; Epstein, 2000; Peck, 2010; Seixas, 1993). In a study of the relationship between ethnic identity and attributions of significance to events in Canada's past, Peck studied pupils' reflections on the interplay between their identity and their conceptions. She found that this interaction was an on-going process and that pupils referred to a particular side of their identity prevailing over others at particular moments. Because pupils' identities and

their understandings of historical significance may affect their learning and impede their engagement with alternative perspectives, it is important to address these identities and understandings (Barton & McCully, 2012; Historical Association, 2007; McCully, Pilgrim, Sutherland, & McMinn, 2002; Sheppard, 2010).

When discussing the significance of sensitive histories, pupils may relate to present conflicts in society or identify with certain historical actors because of their own background and historical representations (Barton & Levstik, 2008; Goldberg *et al.*, 2006; King, 2009). I expect that when discussing the significance of sensitive *heritage*, this situation is even more prevalent because identity and present interests are central to the construction of heritage. Barton (2007) suggested that as a pupil's affective filter concerning a topic grows tighter, his or her rejection of different perspectives becomes stronger. However, neglecting pupils' emotional responses and their understandings of the significance of the past may lead to superficial learning and missed opportunities to help pupils come to grips with sensitive histories that are relevant in their society (Knutson, 2012; McCully *et al.*, 2002). Barton and McCully (2012) found that although pupils in Northern Ireland were willing to learn about national history from multiple perspectives, they had difficulty fully engaging with perspectives other than their own. The authors advocate placing more attention on emotional engagement that leads pupils to develop the genuine curiosity necessary for a real understanding of the other. In a study by Goldberg (2013), pupils were motivated by the discussion of sensitive histories. Furthermore, when pupils' historical interpretations were challenged by peers, their emotional reaction motivated by identification led to a more advanced use of historical practices, such as source evaluation, and a higher level of historical empathy.

### *2.3 Historical Traces and Heritage as Resources for Teaching Sensitive History*

As I have explained in the first chapter, material and immaterial traces of the past can be used in history education in a variety of ways. Inside the classroom, teachers can bring historical objects or invite eyewitnesses into the classroom or allow pupils to interview an elder family member and tell his or her story to the class. Outside the classroom, pupils can visit archives, historical sites, museums and monuments. In the Netherlands, all of these practices are labelled 'heritage education' because the government is stimulating the use of heritage in education. I argue that there is a difference between presenting traces of the past as historical traces or as heritage. I think of a 'heritage approach' as placing an emphasis on the value of the traces for 'our' interests in the present and the future with references to a particular local, regional, national or even global identity. Although particular traces are presented as heritage in a particular heritage project, pupils may not necessarily consider these traces to be heritage. This distinction, however, is not clear-cut. For example, voices emphasising identity formation are also heard in debates regarding the teaching of history (Symcox, 2009). Still, there is a difference in emphasis, and it is problematic that, in practice, teachers and educators often unconsciously adopt a heritage approach to the past,

simultaneously seeking to use the traces as historical sources to stimulate and motivate history learning. To study these ambiguous practices, I focus on pupils' historical imagination and their attribution of significance during a visit to *NiNsee* and the National Slavery Monument.

What might the use of historical traces in such a setting contribute to pupils' imagination of the history of slavery and their attribution of significance to it? Educational experts indicate that museums, historical monuments and sites provide ample opportunities to support imaginative engagement (Marcus *et al.*, 2012). This engagement may be a starting point for historical empathy and increasing pupils' understanding of a certain time in the past. The sensory experience of historical traces may stimulate imaginative engagement, historical empathy and historical inquiry (Davison, 2012; Gregory & Witcomb, 2007; Marcus *et al.*, 2012). Several authors emphasise the beneficial effect of a micro-historical approach using eyewitness accounts or diaries to help pupils understand complex and abstract developments and larger contexts, particularly with regard to sensitive history (Burtonwood, 2002; Davies *et al.*, 2000). There are also constraints, however. Heritage institutions often offer pupils the opportunity to experience the past through, for example, re-enactment. Such heritage experiences have been associated with consumerism and sensationalism and have been criticised for their incorrect or simplified representation of historical reality (De Groot, 2009; Lowenthal, 1998). A heritage approach may thus complicate finding a balance between the cognitive and affective aspects of historical imagination.

With respect to historical significance, presenting historical traces as heritage can evoke interest and motivation because heritage is related to the present and considered to be significant. In addition, explicitly denoting these traces as heritage may enable critical reflection on what heritage is and why particular traces are preserved and by whom (Grever *et al.*, 2012; Seixas & Clark, 2004). For example, sharing the decision-making process behind creating a museum exhibit with pupils may further their understanding of it (Gosselin, 2011). To reflect on the constructed nature of history and heritage and to recognise multiple perspectives are considered important components of thinking and reasoning historically (Van Boxtel *et al.*, submitted). These skills will help pupils make sense of the narratives presented in museums, not only when visiting museums during a school field trip but also when visiting them later in life (Marcus & Levine, 2011). However, a present-orientated heritage approach, as opposed to a more detached and 'neutral' attitude, could also frustrate the learning of history. For example, in his study of history education in the United States, VanSledright (2008) articulated a concern that a dominant official narrative based on a 'shared national heritage' leaves no room for other perspectives and may increase resistance and alienation among groups of pupils that do not share that heritage.

### 3. METHOD

To explore pupils' learning about sensitive history and the historical traces of slavery (which are presented, but not necessarily widely accepted, as heritage), I conducted a case study in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 2010. Amsterdam played an important role in the transatlantic slave trade. In my case study, I followed pupils who participated in a project concerning the history and heritage of slavery that was embedded in their history lessons. The heritage project included an introductory lesson at school, a visit to *NiNsee* and the National Slavery Monument and a closing lesson at school. The heritage project provided the primary case boundaries. The school, pupils, teacher and museum guides associated with the project constituted the case. Within this primary case, thirteen pupils who were followed more closely each constituted a single case.

In the introductory lesson, pupils read short quotations from an enslaved person, a doctor and a ship's captain regarding the conditions on a slave ship and observed four images of the interior and the construction of a slave ship. In triads, they responded to a few questions regarding these sources, such as why the sources held different perspectives. The pupils also wrote down what they expected to find during their visit to *NiNsee*. This task was designed to collect data regarding the pupils' expectations. The pupils also read sections of the diary of Linda Brent (the pseudonym of Harriet Ann Jacobs, who escaped slavery and became an abolitionist) and a reward notice by her former master Dr. James Norcom issued for Jacobs' return.

In the museum lesson, four groups attended a guided tour of the '*Break the silence*' exhibition at *NiNsee* and a tour of the National Slavery Monument. They viewed several paintings by modern Surinamese artists and a short introductory animated video clip. Each activity was led by a different guide. The *NiNsee* tour was an existing educational program developed by *NiNsee*.<sup>12</sup> The last two activities, involving the paintings and video, were excluded from the analysis because not all pupils attended them.

In the closing lesson, the pupils in triads discussed which subtopics of or perspectives on the history and heritage of slavery they found relevant to an exhibition on the subject. First, the pupils had to decide independently and then together which topics they thought were the most important. Then, they were asked to make a collage and prepare a written explanation. This task to discuss the design of a museum exhibition was developed to collect data on the pupils' understandings of the significance of the history and heritage of slavery and how they discussed these understandings with their peers.

#### 3.1 Participants

The group of pupils who participated in the project was the same group that I described in the previous chapter. The group consisted of 55 pupils from two classes at a secondary

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<sup>12</sup> Due to budget cuts, *NiNsee* terminated these on-site museum lessons in 2012 (*NiNsee*, n.d.).

school in Amsterdam. The school was a mid-sized, Catholic public school for higher general education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). The population of the school reflected the diverse social, cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds of the surrounding urban area. In 2010, 11% of the inhabitants of Amsterdam were of Antillean or Surinamese descent (Central Statistical Office, n.d.). The school was located in a relatively wealthy part of the city. However, the population of the school represented Amsterdam as a whole rather than the wealthy neighbourhood where the school was located. A large number of the pupils came from other neighbourhoods or suburbs around Amsterdam. Most of the children living in the neighbourhood where the school is located attended other schools in the area.

The participants were second-year HAVO pupils aged 13 to 14. The participants were 28 pupils from class A and 27 pupils from class B. Thirty-three percent of the participating pupils were female. The classes were culturally and ethnically diverse; the pupils' backgrounds included Dutch, Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Antillean backgrounds. Sixteen percent of the pupils were of Antillean or Surinamese descent. Half of the pupils expressed no religious beliefs, 16% were Muslim, and 15% were Christian. The same history teacher taught both classes. History was a compulsory subject taught for two hours per week. In the first years of their secondary schooling, these pupils studied history chronologically starting from prehistoric times and primarily focusing on Western Europe and the Netherlands. At the time that my research began, the pupils were studying the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in which the topic of slavery is included as part of the history of America.

### *3.2 Data Collection and Analysis*

By triangulating the measurement techniques, I attempted to gain insight into the learning processes in an out-of-school learning environment. The data were considered as a whole as a means of observing the full range of variation in pupils' learning. I conducted four whole-class questionnaires: at the beginning of the project, after the introductory lesson, after the museum visit and after the closing lesson. At the time of the first questionnaire, the pupils knew they were going to visit *NiNsee*. In addition to the questionnaires, thirteen pupils were interviewed individually before and after the project and were observed in triads during the lessons. In addition, I observed the museum guides.

#### *Measurements and analysis of historical imagination*

**Images.** In the questionnaires at the beginning of the project and after the closing lesson, the pupils filled in a structured mind map with the title 'Slavery ± 1650-1850' in the middle and five prompts: 'what I already know about it', 'how I've heard of it before', 'what I see before me', 'how I feel about it' and 'what I would like to know is' (see Appendix A1). I coded the propositions that pupils presented in the mind maps. A proposition was defined as a statement regarding the topic of slavery. I developed eleven codes based upon the

pupils' responses in describing their images of slavery (see table 10). A second rater coded a sample of 73 propositions. Interrater reliability (Cohen's kappa) was .91, which is considered to be very good. After the introductory lesson and after the museum visit, the pupils responded to three prompts for free recall: 'what first comes to mind', 'what I found most interesting' and 'what I did not know before'. Such prompts were successfully used in national evaluation studies of the outcomes and impact of learning in museums in England (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007b). The pupils' responses were coded using the same coding scheme that was applied to the mind maps. A second rater coded a sample of 62 propositions. Interrater reliability (Cohen's kappa) was again very good, at .81.

**Perspectives.** In a second round, I coded the mind map propositions and the free recall responses in terms of which historical actor's perspective the pupils adopted (for example, the perspective of the enslaved person or that of the slave owner) (see table 10). For each pupil, I also coded whether they combined two or more perspectives in their responses. A second rater coded a sample of 65 propositions in the mind maps. Interrater reliability (Cohen's kappa) was .93, which is considered to be very good. For the free recall, a second rater coded a sample of 179 propositions; in this case, interrater reliability (Cohen's kappa) was .92, which is considered to be very good.

**Interest.** In the questionnaires at the beginning of the project and after the closing lesson, I measured pupils' interest in learning about slavery's history and heritage using eight items on a 4-point scale (see table 11). I included items to examine whether pupils learning about the topic were particularly interested in, for example, history, monuments, objects, universal values or their own relationship to the topic. In the first questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was .81, which is considered good. In the last questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was .90, which is considered excellent. Both questionnaires were analysed for differences using paired samples t-tests.

**Emotional engagement.** In the questionnaires after each lesson, I asked pupils to choose one or more emoticons (out of twelve) that represented how they had felt during the lesson (see Appendix A7). The emoticons denoted basic emotions, both positive (e.g., happy, interested) and negative (e.g., angry, bored) (Ainley *et al.*, 2002). Because the measurement instrument included an 'interested' emoticon, this measurement also informed me regarding pupils' interest during the lessons.

Table 10. Codes for images and perspectives in the mind map and free recall responses

Code	Sub code	Example
Image	Enslaved persons working on plantations in America	‘Slaves working really hard on tobacco plantations’.
	Maltreatment or punishment of enslaved persons	‘People being treated as animals. Today a dog is treated better than a slave then’.
	Africa / Middle Passage	‘Black people who are taken away from their homes’.
	Inequality / not being free	‘Slaves that were not treated equally’.
	Modern slavery	‘What I did not know before was that there is still slavery in our time’.
	Testimonies / stories of enslaved persons	‘What I found most interesting was story written by a former woman slave’.
	Museum or museum objects	‘What I found most interesting was the monument’.
	Opinion regarding slavery	‘What comes to mind first is that I find slave trade a real bad thing’.
	Remarks regarding learning activity	‘That the group work went quite well’.
Perspective	Enslaved	‘How slaves arrived in America, that all those whites stood around them’.
	Slave owner	‘Whites with whips hitting blacks when they have to keep on working’.
	Pupils’ own perspective	‘What first comes to mind is that it was much worse than I thought’.
	Present perspective	‘I did not know that there’s still a modern form of slavery’.
	Perspective unclear	‘Nothing good’.
	Two or more perspectives	‘Learned much about life of a slave and how hard it was. Some people thought slavery was a good thing, had no idea about situation on ship’.

Table 11. Items in the questionnaire regarding interest in learning about the history and heritage of slavery

Items
1. About freedom and equality, I want to
2. About objects and stories of slavery, I want to
3. About the history of slavery, I want to
4. About what slavery has to do with me, I want to
5. About why objects and stories of slavery are preserved, I want to
6. About the museum NiNsee about slavery, I want to
7. About how people commemorate slavery, I want to
8. About the slavery monument in Amsterdam, I want to

Note. 4-point scale: know nothing at all, know nothing, know something, know a lot

**Attitude towards learning using historical traces.** After the museum visit, I explored pupils’ attitudes towards learning using historical traces in the museum. I included 10 items with a 4-point scale (see table 12). A higher score indicated a more positive attitude towards learning using historical traces. The items were based on claims regarding the potential of using historical traces as a resource for learning as described in the literature addressing museum learning (Falk & Dierking, 2013; Fienberg & Leinhardt,

2002; Marcus *et al.*, 2012). The items focused on the amount of pleasure experienced during the museum lesson and the perceived contribution of the lesson, particularly the use of historical traces in the museum, to learning about the history of slavery. Cronbach's alpha was .87, which is considered good.

*Table 12. Items on the questionnaire for measuring attitudes towards learning using historical traces during the museum visit*

Items

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1. In this lesson, I could imagine the time of slavery well
  2. In this lesson, I felt that slavery really happened
  3. The objects and stories in the museum made slavery much clearer for me
  4. I liked learning history in a museum
  5. In this lesson, I could empathise well with people living in the time of slavery
  6. I liked working with real objects from the past
  7. In this lesson, I came to find slavery is an important topic
  8. I liked visiting a monument where a remembrance is held every year
  9. I thought it was exciting to see real objects from the past up close
  10. In this lesson, I felt the time of slavery came to life
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*Note.* 4-point scale: completely disagree, disagree, agree, completely agree

#### *Measurements and analysis of understandings of significance*

**Significance.** In the questionnaires at the beginning of the project and after the closing lesson, the pupils were asked how important it was for them to preserve the objects and stories of slavery, and they evaluated eleven reasons for preserving these traces on a 4-point scale (see table 13). The eleven reasons were based on conceptualisations of historical significance by Seixas (2008) and Seixas and Morton (2012), Lévesque (2008) and Cercadillo (2001), which were rephrased to be specific to the historical traces of slavery. In addition, the pupils were allowed to write in their own reasons. The questionnaires were analysed for differences using paired samples t-tests.

**Taking other or multiple perspectives on significance.** The eleven reasons associated with the significance question represent various perspectives on the significance of the historical traces of slavery. I counted the number of reasons for preservation with which the pupils agreed in order to examine whether the pupils approached the question regarding significance from multiple perspectives. A pupil's agreement with a greater number of reasons was interpreted as that pupil's richer understanding of the historical significance.

*Table 13. Reasons for the preservation of the objects and stories of slavery*

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I think it is important that the objects and stories of slavery are preserved
1. Because they remind us that freedom and equality have not always existed
2. Because they mean a lot to the people who descend from enslaved people
3. Because slavery changed the lives of many people
4. Because they will help us to understand how slaves were traded and why
5. Because I would find it a pity if they were gone
6. Because slavery has had many consequences; for example, it brought much wealth to Europe
7. Because they will help to understand the present; for example, many African people now live in America and Europe
8. Because they are very old
9. Because they belong to the Netherlands
10. Because they mean a lot to my family
11. Because they will help me to understand who I am

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*Note.* 4-point-scale: completely disagree, disagree, agree, completely agree

### *Interview*

Based on the results of the first questionnaire, I selected thirteen pupils with diverse preconceptions to interview individually. Using this process, I intended to gather insights into the variety of perspectives that pupils potentially bring to the classroom and to determine whether I could relate these differences to the pupils' self-reported ethnic identity. For my selection, I focused on differences in the pupils' responses presented on the mind map and on differences in opinion regarding the preservation of the objects and stories of slavery. I also considered variety in pupil gender and the birth country of the pupils' parents in making my selections.

Each of the interviews was 20 minutes long and primarily focused on clarification of the questionnaires (see Appendix B). I asked pupils to explain their responses. For example, 'The next two questions concern the preservation of objects and stories of slavery. You indicated you find it important to preserve these. Could you explain your answer to me?' In the interview after the closing lesson, we compared the responses to the questionnaires at the beginning of the project and after the closing lesson. I asked, for example, 'In the previous interview, you explained to me that you thought this was not important. Can you describe what made you change your mind?' and 'Your response is the same in both questionnaires. Is it correct that you still feel the same about this question?' With regard to their responses regarding the preservation of the objects and stories of slavery, I asked if they thought others would agree with them and, if not, who would not and why. These questions allowed me to gain more insight into their adoption of multiple perspectives. Lastly, I asked them to describe their ethnic identity and to reflect on its effect on their responses on the questionnaire (see Peck, 2010). In the interview after the closing lesson, I also asked pupils to describe their experiences and learning during the lessons.

The individual interviews enabled me to discuss each pupil's conceptions and experiences in detail and without active interference by others. There are also, however, disadvantages to a one-on-one interview, as pupils may feel uncomfortable or intimidated

by being alone with a researcher asking questions regarding their opinions. Clearly, my own identity is also important here. Considering that the topic was slavery and many pupils mentioned the issue of inequality between black and white people, my perceived white identity may have had an effect. Although none of the pupils expressed this concern, they may have had the feeling of talking to one of the two ‘sides’.

The 26 interviews were transcribed and used to check and complement my impressions from the questionnaires and observations. I analysed the pupils’ images of the history of slavery; which historical actors’ perspectives they adopted; their interest in the history and heritage of slavery; their emotional engagement during the lessons; their understandings of the significance of the history and heritage of slavery; how these understandings were related to pupils’ self-reported ethnic identity; and their acknowledgement or articulation of other perspectives. I also analysed remarks regarding a specific role or effect of learning about the history of slavery using historical traces as an instructional resource.

#### *Observation and group interaction*

During the museum visit, I videotaped the entire class and, when possible, focused on the pupils who had been interviewed. I analysed the pupils’ nonverbal behaviour (such as movements and facial expressions) as an indicator of interest and engagement. I also videotaped the group work by the four triads during the closing lesson at school (two in each class). My analysis of the group work focused on the sharing of understandings of the significance of the heritage of slavery and the acknowledgement of other and multiple perspectives on its significance.

I also videotaped the museum educators as they conducted their guided tours. I then analysed the videotapes for the inclusion of specific historical content (such as the Middle Passage, plantation work, slave resistance); (the combining of multiple) perspectives of historical actors; the contextualisation of historical actors, events or developments; (a discussion of multiple) perspectives on significance; the interactive construction of significance; and the use of historical traces from a heritage approach.

Table 14 provides an overview of the various instruments that I used at different points during the project.

Table 14. Overview of data collection

At the beginning of the project	After the introductory lesson	During/after the museum visit	During/after the closing lesson
Questionnaire (n=54)	Short questionnaire (n=53)	Short questionnaire (n=50)	Questionnaire (n=53)
- images and perspectives: mind map - interest in learning about the history and heritage of slavery: 8 items (4-point scale) - understandings of the reasons for the preservation of the historical traces: 11 reasons (4-point scale)	- images and perspectives: free recall - emotional engagement and interest: 12 emoticons	- images and perspectives: free recall - emotional engagement and interest: 12 emoticons - attitude towards learning using historical traces: 10 items (4-point scale)	- images and perspectives: mind map - emotional engagement: 12 emoticons - interest in learning about the history and heritage of slavery: 8 items (4-point scale) - understandings of the reasons for the preservation of the historical traces: 11 reasons (4-point scale)
Individual interviews (n=13)			Individual interviews (n=13)
- images and perspectives - interest - emotional engagement - understandings of significance - ideas regarding others' perspectives - self-reported ethnic identity			- images and perspectives - interest - emotional engagement - understandings of significance - learning experiences during lessons
		Video recording of whole class (n=50) - interest and engagement (nonverbal behaviour) Video recording of guides (n=2) - content, perspectives and use of historical traces	Video recording of triads (n=4) - discussion of the significance of the history and heritage of slavery

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Historical Imagination

In the discussion that follows, I first describe the pupils' images, perspectives, interest and emotional involvement before the museum visit. After providing an impression of the guided tour, I discuss these same aspects during the visit and afterward. Lastly, I turn to (the pupils' ideas regarding) the use of historical traces in relation to imaginative engagement.

*At the beginning of the project: maltreated enslaved persons on plantations*

Before the museum visit, pupils' mental images of slavery primarily involved enslaved persons working on plantations in America and the maltreatment or punishment of the enslaved (see table 15).

*Table 15. Images and perspectives in the mind maps and free recall responses (% of propositions)*

Code	Sub code	Mind map <sup>a</sup> (n=80)	Free recall 1 <sup>b</sup> (n=171)	Free recall 2 <sup>c</sup> (n=171)	Mind map <sup>d</sup> (n=68)
Image	Enslaved persons working on plantations in America	41%	22%	1%	27%
	Maltreatment or punishment of enslaved persons	25%	22%	11%	29%
	Africa / Middle Passage	13%	6%	7%	13%
	Inequality / not being free	9%	-	1%	6%
	Modern slavery	-	-	2%	-
	Testimonies / stories of enslaved persons	-	11%	-	-
	Museum or museum objects	-	1%	32%	-
	Opinion regarding slavery	-	4%	8%	-
	Remarks regarding learning activity	-	17%	5%	-
	No response	3%	-	19%	3%
Other	10%	16%	13%	22%	
Perspective	Enslaved person	78%	35% <sup>e</sup>	19% <sup>e</sup>	67%
	Slave owner	6%	5%	3%	4%
	Pupil's own perspective	2%	16%	14%	9%
	Present perspective	-	-	4%	-
	Perspective unclear	9%	35%	49%	7%
	No response	6%	6%	13%	14%
	Other	-	3%	-	-

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>At the beginning of the project. <sup>b</sup>After the introductory lesson at school. <sup>c</sup>After the museum visit. <sup>d</sup>After the closing lesson. <sup>e</sup>Sum is more than 100 because pupils adopted multiple perspectives

In the interviews at the beginning of the project, one pupil said, 'I think there were rich people there with their big houses and, well, a nice living, and they had slaves who did all their work'. Although the maltreatment of enslaved persons was a dominant image in the mind map, the free recall prompt 'did not know about' after the introductory lesson elicited responses concerning the maltreatment of enslaved persons in 41% of the propositions. In the interview after the closing lesson, several pupils explained they had known of this maltreatment but were surprised by its cruelty.

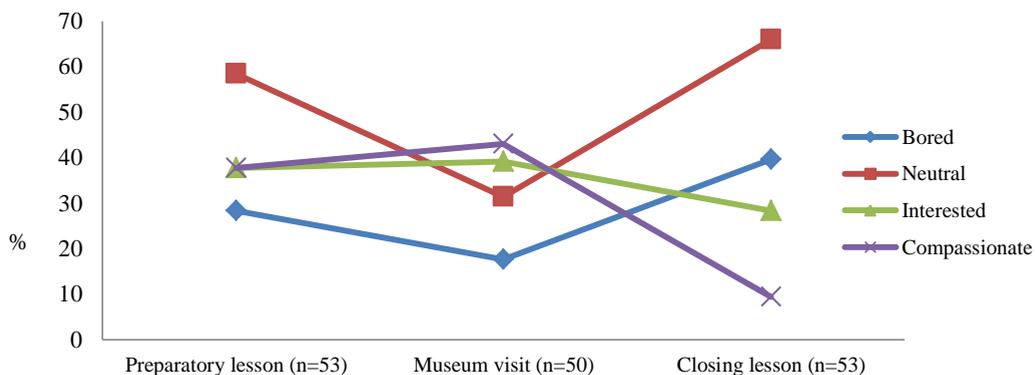
At the beginning of the project, the majority of pupils adopted the perspective of the enslaved (see table 15). After the introductory lesson, I observed certain other perspectives that were presented in the free recall, such as that of the Netherlands: 'what I found most interesting was that the Netherlands traded most of the slaves'. Seven pupils presented two different perspectives in their responses. For example, one pupil wrote,

‘Learned much about life of a slave and how hard it was. Some people thought slavery was a good thing, had no idea about situation on ships’. Three of the pupils said that the most interesting aspect was learning about the different perspectives of different people.

My measurements of pupils’ interest in learning about slavery’s history and heritage indicated that the pupils were interested at the beginning of the project (mean = 2.83, standard deviation = .74). During the introductory lesson, the pupils also felt interested (see figure 3). Based on the free recall, I know that many of the pupils were interested in the ‘true’ stories of enslaved persons, such as Jacobs’ story. Several of the pupils also felt neutral and/or compassionate. In the interview after the closing lesson, four pupils explained that during the introductory lesson, they felt compassion for the enslaved lying in the ships for months and being sold to white people. One pupil also felt ashamed because white people did this for money and his ancestors might have been involved. He felt angry at the slave owners.

At the beginning of the project, the pupils did not differ significantly in their ways and levels of historical imagination. They imagined slavery as consisting of enslaved persons working or being maltreated, they adopted the enslaved perspective, and they felt compassion for the enslaved and were interested in learning more. During the introductory lesson, individual differences became evident, which consisted of differences in the intensity of emotional engagement and in the acknowledgement of different perspectives.

Figure 3. Emoticons chosen (more than 1 allowed) by pupils after each lesson (% of pupils)



Note. The emoticons sad, proud, ashamed, angry, surprised, happy, afraid and disgusted were excluded from the figure because they were rarely selected.

*The NiNsee tour: concrete and engaging stories*

During the guided tour through the *NiNsee* exhibition, pupils were offered opportunities to imagine the history of slavery via detailed stories presented by the guide and via role-play, paintings and drawings of historical texts and images. In a few cases, the guide used objects, for example a whip, to help tell a story, but a great deal of the authentic material and immaterial historical traces that are available in the institute were excluded from the tour. The role-play included, for example, the pupils re-enacting an auction, re-naming enslaved persons at a slave market and demonstrating slave punishments. Topics that were addressed consisted of the slave raids and slave trading in Africa, the Middle Passage (see figure 4), slave markets and plantations in America and the punishment of the enslaved. The dominant perspective in the guide's stories was that of the enslaved. On occasion, the guide explained the actions of the slave traders and owners, but she focused on the pain and suffering that these actions brought upon the enslaved. The exhibition presented other perspectives, but these were not discussed by the guide, nor were the perspectives or interpretations that the pictures or objects represented. The guide used the pictures and objects as visualisation tools to support her story. At the beginning of the tour, the guide presented the transatlantic slave trade in a wider context by explaining the global relationships and the system of trading and using people from one continent as a workforce on another. During the rest of the tour, however, the actions of the historical actors were infrequently placed in context.

*Figure 4. NiNsee exhibition 'Break the silence' depicting the Middle Passage (photo Pieter de Bruijn)*



At the National Slavery Monument in the park, the pupils' experiences were guided by allowing them to walk around the monument, touch it and discuss its meaning. The monument consists of three parts with several life-size figures (see figure 2 in the previous chapter). At the rear of the monument stands a group of men, women and children roped together; in the centre, a human figure passes through a winged arch. At the front, there is a large human figure with outstretched arms. Some pupils quickly came to the conclusion that the monument narrated the path from slavery to freedom. Others described such details as 'wings' and the 'hurt backs' and noticed 'some people being held back' and 'being belittled'. The guide then explained the three parts of the monument as symbolising the path from slavery to freedom, making gestures while walking from one side to the other.

#### *Pupils' learning: compassion, empathy and unanswered questions*

The museum tour raised many questions among the pupils, such as 'were they really our age when they were sold?' or 'why is the man that delivers the punishments black himself?' These questions indicated that the tour had successfully added to the pupils' pre-existing images of slavery. Nevertheless, after the closing lesson, most pupils described images similar to those described beforehand, i.e., images of the maltreatment of enslaved persons and images of the plantations in America (see table 15). The free recall after the museum visit and in the interviews after the closing lesson, however, revealed the development of new images. The museum itself formed a new image, as the free recall prompt 'did not know' elicited mentions of the museum or the monument from 13 pupils. A few pupils also wrote about modern-day slavery. This topic also arose in the interviews, although one pupil did not fully agree with the comparison between the transatlantic slave trade and the human trafficking in sex workers that was presented in the museum. Furthermore, seven pupils said that they now knew that the Netherlands was also involved in the slave trade.

During the visit, the pupils' input occasionally incorporated another perspective. The guide described wounded enslaved persons who were rinsed with seawater and asked what that might have done; one pupil responded that 'it disinfected'. The guide answered that this was true, of course, but that she meant for the pupils to infer that it had stung badly. Notwithstanding such instances, after the project, most pupils adopted the perspective of the enslaved and did not combine multiple perspectives, just as they had at the beginning of the project (see table 15). However, the free recall after the museum visit revealed the development of new perspectives. Eleven percent of the pupils adopted an explicitly present perspective. For example, one pupil wrote 'What comes to mind first is that it was really bad, and I am glad I do not live in that time'. Another new perspective was that white people also could be enslaved, as two pupils wrote. The pupils' responses on the mind map (27 in total) provided insight into the perspectives about which the pupils were still curious. Eight questions asked for an explanation or contextualisation of the perspectives of the slave traders and owners. For example, certain pupils asked how people

had developed the idea of slave trading and why only black people were enslaved. Others wanted to understand the thoughts and feelings of the slave owners or of those who opposed slavery but did not act against it. Of the five pupils who wanted to know more about the enslaved people, three asked why the enslaved did not fight back or try to escape, which presents yet another perspective.

The video recordings of the museum visit showed that the pupils listened to the guides and interacted with them. The pupils rarely interacted with each other. They observed the paintings, drawings and objects that the guides noted but did not examine these closely or explore the museum independently. The stories told by the guides appeared to engage the pupils. In particular, when the guide described in great detail the shipping of the enslaved and when she demonstrated the slave market and the punishment via role-play, the pupils were very attentive and expressed abhorrence and disgust by way of facial expression or exclamations. The pupils expressed interest (see figure 3). Fewer pupils felt neutral or bored than during the first lesson. The emoticon that the pupils chose most often was 'compassionate'. In the interviews after the closing lesson, five pupils reported that they felt compassion for the enslaved persons when seeing how they were transported or punished. Even stronger emotions were also mentioned. One pupil said that she felt the humiliation that the enslaved must have felt, and another felt disgust upon learning about the punishments. She said that she might be able to forget what the slave owners had done, but she would not forgive. Two pupils felt angry at the slave owners and at America, which was supposedly the land of freedom. After the museum visit, the pupils' levels of interest and emotional involvement decreased (see figure 3). The interest level as measured using the last questionnaire indicates that the pupils were still interested in learning about slavery's history and heritage (mean = 2.66, standard deviation = .48) but were significantly less interested than before they participated in the project, as measured using the initial questionnaire ( $t(1.43) = 2.85, p = .007$ ). In the interviews after the closing lesson, several pupils explained that they remained interested but that they knew enough about the topic and thought it was time to begin learning about a new one.

In general, the museum visit confirmed the pupils' images of slavery and enriched their understanding by way of concrete stories. The visit emphasised the enslaved perspective and did not fulfil the pupils' needs to understand other perspectives. The visit aroused interest and evoked questions, which could have served as a starting point for historical inquiry. The pupils' increased emotional engagement indicated that the visit particularly stimulated the affective elements of their historical imagination.

*Historical traces: seeing 'genuine past reality'*

Although the pupils generally scored high on all of the items of the interest scale, they were particularly interested in the objects and stories associated with slavery (mean = 3.09, standard deviation = .71 at the beginning of the project; mean = 2.88, standard deviation =

.70 after the closing lesson). These findings are congruent with their interest in Jacobs' story presented in the introductory lesson and their interest during the museum visit. Overall, the pupils expressed positive feelings regarding learning using historical traces during a museum visit (mean = 2.77, standard deviation = .49). Nearly all of the pupils reported that the museum visit helped them to imagine the time of slavery (see table 12; item 1) and that it made them aware that slavery actually did occur (item 2). During the interviews, many pupils said that the historical traces in the museum were evidence that slavery actually occurred. For example, one pupil explained how the visit had made her aware that slavery is a historical fact: 'yes, because these, um, objects just prove that it, yes, they are from the past, so it is just evidence then'. In addition, in the free recall responses, the monument and museum objects were mentioned frequently. For example, one pupil wrote, 'what I found most interesting was the stuff in *NiNsee*; then it is "true" reality'. However, five pupils wrote they would have liked to view more objects and hear more stories about enslaved persons.

Less than half of the pupils agreed that the museum visit made the era of slavery come alive (see table 12; item 10). In the interview, however, almost all of the pupils said that the historical traces in the museum caused them to empathise with the enslaved. They thought of how miserable the lives of the enslaved were and how they were punished and had to work extremely hard without pay. One of the female pupils participated in a role-play of the sale of enslaved women. The guide told the pupils that girls of her age were sold to provide the owner with many slave children. In the interview, this pupil said that the role-play caused her to think immediately of conditions during that time and that she thought 'no, not so early, children'. Another pupil tried to empathise with the enslaved during the visit of the monument. He reported that he had wanted to stand near the middle part of the monument 'to know what it is like to be a slave first and then to be free', making a circling gesture with his arms when pronouncing the word 'free'. A few of the pupils reflected on the limitations of their empathy:

'Well, I can imagine something, but I just cannot empathise with it because it did not happen to me personally. I often feel that way with history topics, like with the Second World War or something; I really think it is very bad what happened, but it did not happen to me personally, so I do not really know how bad it was.'

Another pupil reported that he had empathised with the enslaved but that this empathy had not made things clearer for him because he did not yet know the entire story.

Overall, the pupils valued the historical traces as part of their learning about slavery because it brought slavery's past closer. Most of the examples of the pupils' empathy indicated a lack of contextualisation and historical perspective, but a few pupils expressed doubts regarding their ability to empathise or regarding the role that empathy plays in understanding history.

#### 4.2 Attribution of Significance

In this section, I first describe the pupils' understandings of significance, its relationship with their identity and their acknowledgement of other perspectives before the museum visit. After presenting an impression of the guided tour, I discuss these same aspects observed during the visit and afterward. Lastly, I turn to (the pupils' ideas regarding) the use of a heritage approach towards historical traces.

##### *At the beginning of the project: descendants and equality*

As discussed extensively in the previous chapter, at the beginning of the project, the pupils found it important to preserve the historical traces of slavery, particularly in relation to the values of equality and freedom and for the descendants of enslaved people (see table 16). The significance for the pupils' own families and for developing a better understanding of themselves scored the lowest. Very few of the pupils provided their own reasons.

*Table 16. Pupils' understandings of the reasons for the preservation of the historical traces of slavery at the beginning of the project and after the closing lesson*

Reason	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Mean <sup>b</sup>	Standard deviation
I think it is important that the objects and stories of slavery are preserved	2.91	.78	3.08	.74
1. Because they remind us that freedom and equality have not always existed	3.09	.59	2.96	.96
2. Because they mean a lot to the people who descend from enslaved people	3.04	.68	3.02	.82
3. Because slavery changed the lives of many people	2.91	.62	2.85	.72
4. Because they will help us to understand how slaves were traded and why	2.85	.66	2.81	.81
5. Because I would find it a pity if they were gone	2.67	.75	2.58	.82
6. Because slavery has had many consequences; for example, it brought much wealth to Europe	2.66	.73	2.54	.96
7. Because they will help to understand the present; for example, many African people now live in America and Europe	2.61	.83	2.62	.79
8. Because they are very old	2.45	.80	2.53	.91
9. Because they belong to the Netherlands	2.15	.77	2.43	.80
10. Because they mean a lot to my family	1.74	.76	1.74	.74
11. Because they will help me to understand who I am	1.70	.66	1.74	.63

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>At the beginning of the project. <sup>b</sup>After the closing lesson. 4-point-scale: completely disagree, disagree, agree, completely agree

In the interviews, the two main arguments that the pupils used for attributing significance to the heritage of slavery were discussed in detail. First, when pupils related the significance of the heritage of slavery to the issue of equality, slavery became a historical example of inequality that could be used to argue for equality. In terms of the significance for the descendants of enslaved people, the second main argument, one pupil said,

‘Because there is much emotion..., many, many families have been affected by this, and it is important that these objects and stories are preserved because they are of value for those people.’

On average, pupils agreed or strongly agreed with six reasons for preserving the historical traces of slavery in the questionnaire, and therefore, they valued multiple perspectives in their understandings of significance. In the interviews, the pupils’ capacities to consider other perspectives varied. Some pupils were thoughtful when trying to adopt another perspective. For example, a pupil of self-reported Dutch identity said that he could imagine that the descendants would rather forget about slavery and ignore the historical traces, but at the same time, he thought that they had the right to know what happened to their ancestors and the traces therefore should be preserved.

I conducted an analysis of variance to investigate the differences in attributions of significance between pupils of Surinamese(-Dutch) and Antillean(-Dutch) backgrounds (n=9) and those of other backgrounds (n=46). The pupils of Surinamese(-Dutch) and Antillean(-Dutch) backgrounds scored significantly higher than other pupils on item 10, which concerns significance to their own family ( $F(1,52) = 16.07, p=.000$ ). I observed a relationship between pupils’ understandings of significance and their self-reported ethnic identity in the interviews, although this relationship was often ambiguous. Four pupils with a self-reported Surinamese or Antillean identity established a personal connection because of enslaved ancestors, but three of them simultaneously tried to create a distance between themselves and this history. For example, one said that perhaps her family had been enslaved a long time ago, but she thought that that was far too long ago to still care about. Three pupils with a self-reported Dutch identity struggled with the question regarding whether they should feel responsible for slavery or the transatlantic slave trade. In contrast with the results of the questionnaire, the interviews indicated that pupils did relate personally to the subject.

At the beginning of the project, the pupils nearly unanimously attributed significance to the heritage of slavery for various reasons, but they did so particularly in relation to the concepts of equality and freedom and for the descendants of the enslaved. In several cases, the pupils’ understandings of significance were clearly related to their self-reported ethnic identity. A few of the pupils did not want to emphasise this relationship or wanted to distance themselves from it.

#### *The NiNsee tour: affirming pupils’ understandings*

The exhibition tour began with a brief, non-interactive reflection on the necessity of breaking the silence regarding the history of slavery in Dutch society. This reflection also discussed the existence of modern-day slavery in the form of child labour, child soldiers and human trafficking in sex workers. In another connection between history and contemporary life, the tour guide noted that many of Amsterdam’s beautiful mansions were built by people involved in the slave trade, thereby providing a visible reminder of the

Dutch Republic's role in the slave trade. With these connections between the past and the present, the guide attributed significance to the history of slavery. There was no further discussion regarding the attribution of significance to specific traces of slavery by various groups in society during the tour through the exhibition.

The guide emphasised the significance of the National Slavery Monument by providing historical context, noting that the monument's construction aligned with a global trend to acknowledge the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery. Her presentation explained the perspective of enslaved people and of those who advocated for the erection of a monument to acknowledge the history of slavery. Launching an interactive discussion on the meaning of the monument and its three elements, the tour guide asked the pupils to provide their first impressions. The guide allowed the pupils to discover what the monument meant to them by examining the monument and choosing a particular position to stand near the monument. This process prompted a discussion about freedom, concluding with the tour guide's remark that slavery still exists in the modern day. In addition, the guide explained her personal relationship to the monument, noting that she was a descendant of a slave owner and a female slave. The guide added that instead of carrying the weight of past slavery on her shoulders, she preferred to focus on the future. She also explained that a commemoration service was held at the monument each year and that individuals who visited the monument often left roses or found peace through reflection.

*Pupils' learning: personal and societal understandings of significance*

Although the pupils focused on the historical traces of slavery during their *NiNsee* visit, they did not ask questions regarding why these traces were preserved and exhibited there. At the monument, the pupils interpreted the symbolic elements and discussed whether they liked the monument. Some pupils were clearly impressed by the monument and the atmosphere permeating the site, whereas others were less attentive. After the project, pupils still valued the preservation of the historical traces of slavery (see table 16). Notably, I did not find significant differences between the first and the last questionnaire.

The data showed that the pupils learned about and discussed perspectives on the significance of slavery that were different from their own. During the visit to the monument, for example, when the guide said that slavery was not a pleasant story to be told, one pupil agreed with the statement but added that slavery had also brought significant wealth to Europe. The guide encouraged caution on this matter and awaited research to form an opinion. Notably, the perspective mentioned by the pupil is an important issue in contemporary debates on the Dutch role in the transatlantic slave trade (Emmer, 2012). In the questionnaire after the closing lesson, a significantly higher number of pupils (27), compared with 16 in the first questionnaire, noted the importance of preserving the historical traces of slavery because this history is part of the Netherlands. In the interview,

some pupils explained that before the lessons, they had not known that the Netherlands had participated in the transatlantic slave trade. Further, in the free-recall prompt termed ‘did not know’, eleven pupils had not known about the monument, and two pupils had not known about the museum. These responses suggest that the pupils learned that significance is attributed to history and the heritage of slavery in Dutch society and that the pupils found this insight to be worthy of mention. Additionally, in the ‘did not know’ prompt, one pupil had not known ‘that it [slavery] was such a taboo’, referring to a different perspective in Dutch society. The interviews also revealed that although several pupils had previously believed that former slaves and their descendants sought to forget about slavery, the pupils now believed otherwise. After viewing the preserved objects and the monument, the pupils realised that at least some of the descendants sought to remember the history of slavery.

The closing lesson and the interview that followed it provided several examples of how pupils related (their own) identities or present societal conflicts to the topic of slavery. In one triad, for example, two pupils (pupils 2 and 3) indicated that their ancestors had been enslaved; however, the pupils noted that they did not relate more closely to the topic because of this factor. Image 8 (see figure 5) prompted the following discussion among these three pupils\*:

1: ‘We choose this topic because...’

2: ‘It is important that descendants can narrate this.’

3: ‘That descendants...’

2: ‘But that would mean that it is important that I and my children can narrate it... well!’

3: ‘Yeah’ [pupil giggles]

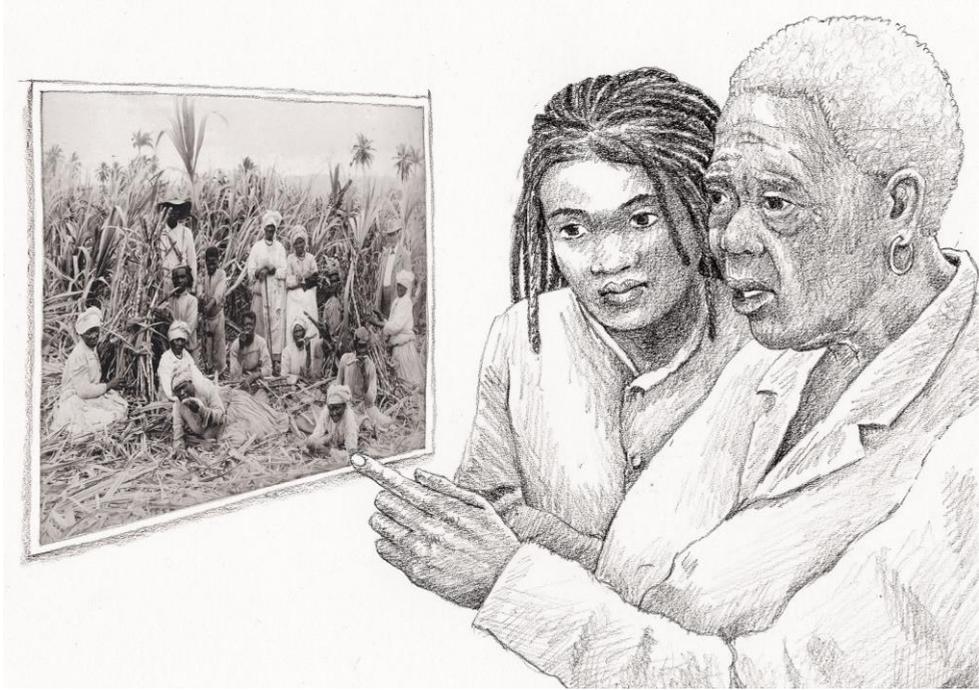
1: ‘Yes! We choose this topic because it shows that people can narrate it without having been involved in it themselves’.

2: ‘No, because the image was, um, that people, that relatives can narrate it’.

1: ‘For that very reason. So we choose this topic because it shows people can talk about it without having been able to have been involved in it themselves’.

\*Self-reported identity: 1 Moroccan; 2 Spanish-Surinamese-Dutch; 3 Dutch-Antillean.

Figure 5. Image 8 'Stories of Dutch families about slavery' from the task in the closing lesson (drawing by Wim Euverman)



Pupils 2 and 3 did not agree with pupil 1. In the end, the pupils indicated that it was important that descendants could narrate the stories of slavery. Although the pupils believed that past and present events were related through family memory, when they applied this concept to themselves, the pupils did not experience the general continuity that had been discussed. However, the pupils also did not accept or understand pupil 1's solution that people can share their knowledge of history without having been personally involved in historical events. The response of pupil 2 indicates the belief that relatives possess a special status in relating stories because they were personally involved in the history. Pupils from Antillean(-Dutch) and Surinamese(-Dutch) backgrounds scored significantly higher on item 10 (see table 16) regarding family in the post-questionnaire ( $F(1.51) = 17.68, p = .000$ ). Some pupils expressed explicit ideas regarding how descendants were personally related to the subject and projected these ideas to their classmates; however, these ideas did not always match others' experiences. For example, one pupil believed that an African pupil would feel personally related to the subject because he was African; however, the African pupil in question said he knew that his family was not traded to America (because they still lived in Africa) and that he personally had nothing to do with slavery. Another pupil believed that descendants of enslaved people would seek to learn more about freedom,

whereas his group member, who was a descendant, suggested that studying freedom meant less to him than learning about the lives and situations of the enslaved persons.

To summarise, the pupils' existing understandings of the significance of the heritage of slavery were reinforced by the museum visit. Further, these understandings were enriched with perspectives on the significance in society and how these perspectives may be related to people's identity. The triad discussions and the individual interviews revealed that some pupils had simplified notions of this interplay between perspectives and identities or struggled with it in terms of their own identity.

### *Heritage: reading between the lines*

Some interview remarks after the closing lesson indicated that adopting a heritage approach towards historical traces stimulated pupils' reflections and understandings of the significance of the heritage of slavery. For example, when describing the visit to the monument, one pupil noted the following:

'I saw it, and I saw those roses on it, and then I thought, well, if a rose, well many people do think about it, and it is really important for them. Because of the roses, it looked really sad.'

Although the guide had explicitly drawn the pupils' attention to the roses, pupils also read between the lines of the guide's words and discerned messages about the heritage of slavery. One pupil found meaning amidst personal comments that the guide had made but not emphasised, strengthening the monument's significance:

'Yes, that woman had then, I think, um, she descended from slavery too, and I think to her it was very important, that statue, and if it would break down or if they would say "no we do not want that statue there anymore" then it would really hurt her, I think; a thing like this seems very important to me, that it will be preserved, these sort of things'.

The pupil's use of words related to descent ('from slavery') is interesting because the guide had indicated that she was the descendant of a slave owner and his female slave. Although the pupils had drawn clear-cut lines between the descendants of the enslaved and those of their owners, an encounter with an actual descendant challenged this idea.

Examining slavery from a heritage perspective encouraged pupils to reflect on their personal relationship or engagement with the history and heritage of slavery. One pupil described an intense experience during the museum visit, appropriating the historical traces as the heritage of his ancestors:

'Like with the canoe, just how they sat in it, and you could see ship decks as well, and well, I could see where my ancestors sat in, and yes, what they have been through'. (see also figure 6)

Several other pupils noted an interest in how they might be related to the history of slavery and reported that they had discussed the matter with other family members at home after the visit to *NiNsee*.

Overall, adopting a heritage approach stimulated not only the pupils' reflection on the ways in which people attribute significance to historical traces but also the pupils' personal engagement with the traces and their attribution of significance to them. The pupils' remarks showed that the heritage approach conveyed a powerful message that was easily understood.

*Figure 6. NiNsee exhibition, 'Break the silence' – the 'canoe' (photo Pieter de Bruijn)*



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I explored how Dutch pupils in two urban classrooms imagined the history of slavery and attributed significance to slavery when confronted with historical traces that were presented as Dutch heritage.

The pupils' historical imagination was primarily stimulated in affective ways during the project, evoking interest, emotional engagement and moral responses. Although the pupils' images of maltreated enslaved persons on plantations and their enslaved perspectives were enriched by detailed stories, objects and role play, these images and perspectives did not change profoundly throughout the lessons. Some pupils added new images and perspectives to their existing knowledge, most notably regarding the Dutch involvement in the slave trade. I observed very few cases in which the pupils combined multiple perspectives regarding various historical actors. However, the pupils reported that the museum visit enabled them to clearly imagine the time of slavery and to believe that

slavery actually occurred. Additionally, the pupils' emotional engagement increased, and many pupils empathised with the enslaved. The history was sensitive for some of these pupils, who were emotionally affected by the horror of slavery or who identified with the enslaved. Notably, the majority of the pupils empathised without significant contextualisation or an awareness of the distinction between the past and the present. Therefore, these findings show that a heritage approach can overemphasise the affective elements of historical imagination engagement, thus impeding a historical perspective, as the existing literature warns (Grever *et al.*, 2012). However, pupils' questions and reflections after the project showed that their affective engagement aroused interest and motivation for further learning. In school, this finding can be used as a starting point to add context and other perspectives to pupils' images.

My case study demonstrates the processes that may occur when historical traces are presented as heritage and when issues of significance and identity become central. At the beginning of the project, pupils believed it was important to preserve the historical traces of slavery, primarily to remember that freedom and equality have not always existed and because these traces are important to the descendants of enslaved people. These ideas, which resembled those expressed by the tour guides and the exhibition, were reinforced during the project. During the museum visit, pupils gained insight into the sensitivities that surround the topic of slavery in Dutch society and considered how these sensitivities are sometimes related to a person's identity or background. At the monument, the pupils were invited to reflect on the significance of slavery in society and to verbalise their own position. However, the main sensitivity regarding slavery in society, the lack of awareness, was not discussed extensively. Although one pupil learned that the Dutch history of slavery was considered a taboo topic, the majority of the pupils did not appear to be aware of this issue. However, some pupils did struggle with this history and their own position towards it; they related personally to the topic, sometimes based on their self-reported Surinamese, Antillean or Dutch identity. Some pupils projected their understandings of significance onto other pupils based on their specific ethnic backgrounds or identity; however, these presumptions did not always match with the other person's experience. For example, some pupils who were the descendants of enslaved people did not appear to care about this history because slavery had occurred many generations before the pupils were born. These issues were not emphasised in the discussion at the monument. Despite the nuanced personal story of the guide, pupils were not guided into deeper reflection on the interplay between perspectives and identity. The closing lesson and the interviews showed that many pupils exclusively ascribed the heritage of slavery to the descendants of enslaved people and linked this heritage directly to a black ethnic identity. These findings demonstrate the danger of reinforced stereotypes and exclusion when teaching pupils about sensitive history and heritage (I. Philips, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2011). The study also shows the importance of reflecting with pupils on the interplay between identity and people's conceptions as well as on the dynamics of this interplay.

Finally, this case study illustrates some methodological and practical difficulties in researching in-depth learning processes in out-of-school learning environments. For example, at the end of the museum visit, it was difficult to create a space for pupils to quietly fill in the questionnaire. In addition, it was challenging to capture pupil interaction and emotional engagement on tape. Further, because of the lack of similar previous research in the field of heritage education, I designed my own questionnaires. Although the scales that I used appeared to offer consistent measurements, they require testing on a wider scale to test their validity and reliability. For example, I operationalised pupils' understandings of the significance of heritage as their opinion about the importance of preserving objects and stories. I used the interviews to determine when pupils approached objects and stories as historical sources and when they used a 'heritage approach', valuing the traces with regard to society or to themselves personally. The triangulation of measuring techniques was very helpful for developing a deep understanding of this specific case. This procedure provided me with data from various standpoints to examine the case in its complexities.

This study is limited in that it investigated only one educational project related to the heritage of slavery (a visit to *NiNsee* and the National Slavery Monument) among a variety of potential educational projects and activities organised by schools and heritage organisations. The aim was not to assess the quality of the project that I investigated. Instead, I intended to describe how pupils can engage in historical imagination and attribute significance during history lessons in which historical traces are presented as heritage in the context of a museum. Several classes in the Netherlands participate in such lessons. My small, exploratory case study is only an initial step towards improved insight into the processes at work during such history lessons. Nevertheless, my findings suggest that it is important to reflect with pupils on the multiple perspectives of different historical actors and different groups in society as well as their own and to contextualise these perspectives to enable critical reflection on the sensitive history and heritage of slavery that supports historical understanding. The next chapter elaborates on this issue of adopting multiple perspectives on sensitive history and heritage by examining pupils' learning while engaged in a heritage project that explicitly included multiple perspectives on WWII history.