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**EXPLORING TRANSACTIONAL AND HISTORICAL DISTANCES IN HISTORY
EDUCATION: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

by

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the

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University of Pretoria

2023

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Date of Submission: December 2023

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I, Adrienne van As, declare that:

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As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JM Wassermann', with a large, stylized initial 'J' on the left.

Signed: Prof JM Wassermann (supervisor)

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Abstract

I am Adrienne van As, a White Afrikaans-speaking South African. My upbringing in apartheid and post-apartheid Kraaifontein in the Western Cape and my lived experience in various educational settings profoundly influenced my interest in history and education. My career has spanned various educational roles, from being a student to teaching and lecturing, which shaped my understanding of some of the complexities of teaching history. This research has investigated the factors that shaped and affected the transactional and historical distances I experienced and the impact of my lived experience on these distances in history education. The methodology of this autoethnography is characterised by a blend of personal experience and cultural analysis, using qualitative research techniques within an interpretative framework, with a unique application of cabinets of curiosities. The research examined transactional and historical distance in history education, initially focusing on transactional distance theory and later incorporating historical distance. It used a metaphor of a concertina to describe how these theories interacted, suggesting that various factors influenced the distances in the educational experience, similar to how a musician controls a concertina to produce harmonious or disharmonious tunes. My research provides comprehensive insights into transactional and historical distances, demonstrating the influence of the effects of storytelling, dialogue, student autonomy, and pedagogical approaches on these distances, and how the personal and cultural backgrounds, educator interactions, and different educational settings influenced the students' engagement with history and shaped their historical perspectives. The transactional and historical distances in this study varied based on factors influenced by my experiences in formal and informal educational environments, official and unofficial narratives, and how different types of history shaped my understanding of the past. The research highlights the importance of diverse perspectives, narrative techniques, and the integration of personal experiences in developing historical literacy and reducing detachment from history, ultimately offering a nuanced view of how various factors collectively impacted the students' historical

understanding and connection. My research on the distances in history education is significant for its deep insight into the learning experiences of individuals and the influence of personal and cultural backgrounds. It bridges the theoretical and practical aspects of education, emphasising the personal nature of learning history. The findings are particularly relevant for curriculum development, teaching strategies, and the evolution of history education, potentially reshaping how history is taught and understood.

Key terms: autoethnography, history education, transactional distance, historical distance, lived experience, cabinets of curiosities

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

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This thesis is dedicated to my family and all my educators. Your love and support have motivated me throughout this challenging endeavour. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you for standing by me and being a constant source of strength.

May this work contribute, in its small way, to advancing knowledge in history education. I dedicate this thesis to all those who believe in the pursuit of knowledge and the power of perseverance.

List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

2OEF	2 Oceans Education Foundation
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
AORN	Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
BCE	Before the Common Era
BCS	British Computer Society
BEd	Bachelor of Education degree
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CIPDH	Center for the Promotion of Human Rights
CMGE	Centre for Multigrade Education
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DE	Distance education
DEIC	Dutch East India Company
EASA	Education Association of South Africa
EDEN	European Distance Education Network
ESI	Emerging Scholars Initiative
FET	Further Education and Training
HD	Historical distance
HE	History education
ICCE	International Council for Correspondence Education
ICICTE	International Conference on Information, Communication Technologies in Education
LMS	Learning Management System

NAEA	National Art Education Association
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigations
ODL	Open distance learning
OUP	Oxford University Press
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statements
RTA	Reflexive thematic analysis
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAS	South African Ship
SASHT	South African Society for History Teaching
SUNY	State University of New York
TDT	Transactional distance theory
TOGI	Two Oceans Graduate Institute

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CHAPTER 1: THE ENTRY HALL

Introduction to the Entry Hall

For the past number of years, while working as a lecturer in history education, I have experienced mixed emotions about working online. On the one hand, I enjoyed employing all the advantages of online learning. On the other, I felt isolated and removed from my history education pre-service educators¹. However, I soon realised that the distances I experienced were not new. Distance has been part of my life for as long as I have been involved in history education. Who I am, where I came from, and my lived experience in history education has been, among others, distasteful factors. Therefore, due to my curiosity about distances in history education, I set out on this PhD journey to try to understand these distances, set against the background of my past and my lived experience of history education in South Africa, both formally and informally, officially and unofficially. Consequently, I have chosen autoethnography as my research methodology.

In autoethnography, the researcher is positioned in the middle of the research and describes, methodically analyses, and reflects upon the self and others' lived experiences of their world and history education. As a researcher, I looked inward to the self (auto) but also outward (ethno) by exploring my life through the lenses that were relevant to this study (Chang, 2008). For this reason, I mostly used first-person narration in this study.

I also use the notion of blueprints throughout this thesis. Grant and Osanloo (2014) compare the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of a study with two types of blueprints: first, the floor plan (conceptual framework) and second, the elevation drawing (theoretical framework). As shown in Figure 1.1, The Entry Hall introduces the reader to my thinking and development process in exploring transactional and historical distances in history education.

I start this introduction by outlining the background and context of this research. This discussion of the background and context is essential for the reader to understand the

¹ In this research, I use the term educator since it is a broader term encompassing a more comprehensive range of individuals involved in the educational process. Educators can include not only teachers but also people in various roles within the field of education, both informal and formal.

personal, historical, and contextual backdrop against which the research unfolds. I elaborate on my reasoning and motivation behind conducting this study, after which I shed light on the conceptual and theoretical framework, clarify key concepts, and rationalise the selected research design and methodology, which incorporate the notion of cabinets of curiosities. Finally, I outline the rooms for the rest of the thesis before moving on to the next room. Figure 1.1 shows the outline of this research as a house design, leading from one room to the next. In this chapter, we are in The Entry Hall.

Figure 1.1

Outline of the research as a house design



Background and Context to The Entry Hall

I recognise that my identity and background hold significant importance within this study. The concept of “self” as the “auto” is a fundamental element of autoethnography, making it essential to provide an introduction about myself. This introduction aims to provide

insight into my identity and origins, aiding the reader in comprehending the context of my research.

My name is Adrienne van As, and I self-identify as a White Afrikaans-speaking woman (although I am writing my thesis in English, using English as my First Additional Language). I was born in August 1979 at Somerset Hospital in Sea Point, Cape Town, South Africa. My father, Piet van As, was a fourth engineer on the research vessel, the *R. S. A.*, that travelled regularly to Antarctica (as seen in Figure 1.2) and several other destinations. My mother and father met on the *R. S. A.* when she and her family requested a ship tour while visiting Cape Town harbour. My mother was a young woman from Pretoria, fresh out of college (see Figure 1.3). For the first two years of my life, the *R. S. A.* was at sea for about five weeks, with one week at home before returning to sea. During these weeks, my mother, Marie van As, and I stayed behind on the fifth floor of the Son Vida apartment building in Sea Point, overlooking Cape Town harbour, Table Bay, and Robben Island.

Figure 1.2

My father, Piet van As



Note. My father built a snowman in Antarctica in 1979 during a journey on the South African research vessel, the *R. S. A.*

Figure 1.3

My mother, Marie van As



Note. My mother in front of the Afrikaans Language Monument in Paarl in 1977. This photograph was taken on the day my parents got engaged.

However, for the most significant part of my growing-up years, we lived in Kraaifontein, a working-class suburb north of Cape Town. My two younger brothers were born there, Jaco in 1982 and Heine in 1987 (see Figure 1.4). Following this period, my father became employed in the oil pollution section of the Department of Transport's Marine Division. His workplace was just outside the harbour, necessitating a daily commute between Kraaifontein and Cape Town. When I close my eyes, I can still smell how he smelled when he returned home – a combination of diesel, oil, and sweat.

Figure 1.4

Jaco, Heine, and I posing for a photograph in a garden



On the other hand, my mother worked from home baking cakes and pastries for a home craft shop in a neighbouring town, Durbanville, as she had studied Home Economics at the Pretoria Technikon. At the end of the 20th century, everyone went to home craft shops to buy homemade baked goods like cakes, milk tarts, and pastries. As we grew older, we all assumed various responsibilities. As a result, I still hate doing those chores – washing dishes, making puff pastry dough, and deboning chicken breasts – but I love eating pastries!

Kraaifontein is one of the northern suburbs of Cape Town, about 30 km from Cape Town. When I was growing up, Kraaifontein was a low- to middle-class socio-economic area divided into three sections. We lived in the area north of the national road, the N1. There was a section between the N1 and the railway line, and the oldest part of Kraaifontein was on the other side of the railway line. During those early years, the community in our part of Kraaifontein was comprised of White residents. This demographic composition was a direct consequence of apartheid policies and the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950, which imposed strict restrictions on property ownership and land occupation based on racial segregation (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). Accordingly, the area in Kraaifontein where we lived was a Whites-only suburb.

We lived in a three-bedroom house with a big back garden on Byron Street in Windsor Park (see Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5

The three-bedroomed house where I grew up



Strangely enough, most of the streets in our area were named after well-known Britons, like Darwin, Victoria, Kipling and Livingston. During my childhood, Byron Street was on the outskirts, on the northern side of Kraaifontein, with the Kraaifontein Cemetery just down the road. Beyond the outskirts of Kraaifontein, there was mainly farmland: wheat fields, land with cattle, a chicken farm (which we visited once during a school excursion), and a dairy farm where we went to buy milk. These days, the whole area is surrounded by development, and it is impossible to see where one suburb ends and another one starts.

In our living room, there was an old cabinet with unique ornaments and heirlooms, like special cups, saucers, plates, and bottles (see Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6

The walls of the living room are decorated with old family objects and photographs



The living room walls were covered with old family photographs and objects: a sickle for cutting wheat, wooden needles to repair fishing nets, and a tinder box for lighting a fire. Other objects like glass bottles, plates, an old meat grinder, wedding photographs, and a bronze shell casing were on the shelves (see Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7

Jaco, Heine, my father and me



Note. My mother took this photograph of Jaco, Heine, my father and me in our living room. In the background, you can see the curiosity cabinet I grew up with.

The photographs and objects were memorabilia from my father's travels or handed down from family to family. Each photograph had a story. I was raised in a family that loved storytelling about the past. We often sat around the dining room table and shared our thoughts and knowledge based on books, television shows, or sites we visited. We often talked about historical events, places, and people. This experience made us curious about the world around us and the past. We became historical explorers. Even today, this is what we love to do. This cabinet of curiosities and its stories inspired me to explore my past and lived experiences and to use metaphorical cabinets of curiosities in this study.

In 1986, I went to Aristeia Primary School in Kraaifontein since it was the closest primary school to our home. Initially, we either walked or drove the one kilometre to and from school or Uncle Giles from across the street dropped me off on his way to work. In our year group, there were two Afrikaans classes and one English class. As only White people lived in the area at the time, the school was predominantly comprised of White Afrikaans educators and students – in this study, I use the term student to refer to someone who formally attends a school or a class.

During apartheid, students from different races attended separate, segregated schools as a result of the Group Areas Act, while other policies dictated the medium of instruction (De Wet & Wolhuter, 2009). In anticipation of future developments, the government altered education policies during the latter stages of apartheid. One noteworthy adjustment during this period was the introduction of Model C schools. These schools were established as the National Party, which held political power, sought to safeguard the well-funded White schools. This move was driven by an awareness that imminent changes would ultimately end racially based privileges (Christie & McKinney, 2017). Generally, being former White schools, Model C schools were, and still are, a historical link to White privilege (Christie & McKinney, 2017). These schools were state-aided (or semi-private), with the school governing bodies running the school, appointing staff, determining the fees, and maintaining the facilities (Christie & McKinney, 2017).

In early 1991, South African state schools that were previously restricted to White students were legally authorised to accept students from other racial backgrounds (Christie, 1995). I remember when – after years of segregation in education – the first Coloured girl joined our school in 1991. There was a special assembly to prepare us for her arrival. In South Africa, in official terminology, the term “Coloured” refers to individuals of mixed racial heritage, such as Black–White, Black–Asian, White–Asian, or Black–Coloured unions, as well as their descendants (Brown, 2000). It is a racial classification inherited from the apartheid government and is still used socially, economically, and politically in the current post-apartheid South African democracy (Kenny, 2020).

I only truly became aware of South Africa’s segregated and racial situation in my latter primary school years. I remember how my parents instructed us to hide between the car’s back and front seats if someone attacked us, especially when we drove on the R300 or the N2 highways, which were the routes we had to take to visit my grandmother in Bredasdorp. We often had emergency drills at school in case there were attacks by apartheid freedom fighters and protestors such as United Democratic Front activists. During these drills, we either had to hide under the desks in the classroom or, sometimes, leave the school building in case of a fire. In the 1980s, around Cape Town, in urban areas like Athlone, Bonteheuwel, Gugulethu, and Mitchells Plein (suburbs located along the R300 and the N2), there were ongoing clashes between the youth, students, and people of all ages and cultures and the police and army of the apartheid regime. The former group used stones and petrol bombs, while the latter group had Casspirs, tear guns, and guns with either live ammunition or rubber bullets (Field, 2004). Ultimately, we were never exposed to the protests in Kraaifontein near our home, school, or elsewhere.

I also remember when Nelson Mandela was released from Victor Verster Prison (today known as Drakenstein Correctional Centre) in February 1990. I was 10 years old and in

Standard 3 (Grade 5)². As far as I remember, a television was on somewhere. Even though many people went to the Victor Verster Prison or the Cape Town Parade, where Mandela delivered his first public speech after being released, many people lined up along the N1, which was only about one kilometre from our school and 400 metres from our home. Among these were my father and Heine, who was still too young for school but peddled the distance to the N1 on my father's bicycle.

Like my two younger brothers, I went to Stellenberg High School (1992–1997) in the neighbouring suburb of Bellville. We chose this school not only because of the quality of its education but because Stellenberg offered art as a subject, while Monument Park High School, our closest high school in Kraaifontein, did not. The difference in offerings was not unusual between schools in different socio-economic areas of nearby towns. I was interested in art by then, possibly because I did well at it.

On my first day at Stellenberg High School, I felt lost and alone walking into the school grounds, which were large and full of students. I hardly knew anyone except for a few other gymnasts. I was a shy teenager. In hindsight, I had low self-esteem. Coming from Kraaifontein, it felt as if we were much poorer than the other students. I never really had any good friends, so sometimes I went to sit in the library during break since I had nowhere else to go. It felt as if nobody knew me. I did not even think the educators knew my name (with some exceptions). Mostly, we would walk into a classroom, sit down, take out our books and listen to the educator go on and on, explaining what we needed to remember, what to do, and what we were not doing right. Consequently, for the most part, I can say that I did not like high school. Concurrently, there were ongoing negotiations at a national level, ultimately culminating in the formal dismantling of apartheid in 1994 with the historic occurrence of the first democratic elections.

² After the end of apartheid in 1994, the naming of the standards changed to grades; thus sub. A became grade 1, sub. B became grade 2, standard 1 became grade 3, standard 2 became grade 4, etc.

I considered becoming an educator when I was in primary school because some of the educators inspired me. However, in my last year of high school, I reconsidered my goal. Did I want to be an educator? Did I want to pursue a career in art, sport, or geography? These were the subjects that I liked. It was also the subjects I did best in, much more so than in mathematics and science. So, after much consideration, I decided that I wanted to study to become a primary school educator. I could combine everything I liked into one career without leaving something behind, and I liked my primary school years much more. Consequently, in January 1998, I started my undergraduate studies at the Boland College of Education in Wellington in the Western Cape (one of the new nine provinces). Unlike Kraaifontein, Wellington has a rich history with many older buildings, like Bliss Hall, the hostel I stayed in, which was built in 1904. The campus was a bit like school. The classrooms looked like school classrooms, and there was still a bell at the end of each lesson.

As a tight-knit group of about 25 students in a class, we learned to teach Intermediate and Senior Phase students (Grades 4 to 9). Slowly but surely, my interests changed during my undergraduate studies. While I continued to love subjects like Art and Geography, Afrikaans and History soon became my favourite subjects. For this reason, I took History as one of the main subjects in my final year, along with two other electives, Afrikaans and Art. I was blessed to have inspiring lecturers at Boland College of Education in Wellington. I was a teaching assistant for Art in my final year. The art lecturer, Dr Georina Westraadt (who later became a colleague and friend), asked me to be her assistant. Soon thereafter, I had to decline the invitation of the history lecturer, Dr Jurie Joubert, to be his assistant. Amongst my other responsibilities, like preparing paper and other art media for Dr Westraadt's lessons, I even taught some art lessons to the first-year students!

At that time, colleges and universities were racially separated without centralised control. There was an absence of national planning, quality assurance mechanisms, accountability measures, standardised curricula, qualifications, or significant variations in per capita expenditures (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In 1994, the new government had to decide what to do with the 120 Colleges of Education across South Africa (Parker, 2003,

as cited in Department of Basic Education, 2011). This decision was informed by the 1992 Teacher Education Report, titled National Education Policy Investigations (NEPI). The report highlighted the need for a complete overhaul of the educator preparation and development system (African National Congress, 1994). The reasons cited for this overhaul included the lack of uniformity, absence of coherent planning within the educator education sector, disparities in the quality of inputs and outputs, underutilisation of many college facilities, undemocratic governance structures, and a stifling and uncritical institutional culture, among other issues.

In addition, the predominant focus on primary education training led to an oversupply of primary school educators, an undersupply of secondary school educators, and a need for mathematics, science, and language educators (Parker, 2003, as cited in South Africa Department of Basic Education, 2011). The NEPI Report, in conjunction with the White Paper on Education and Training (South Africa Department of Education, 1995) and the National Commission on Higher Education findings, collectively affirmed the recommendation that the Colleges of Education should be merged into existing higher education institutions. This merger aimed to establish a smaller number of higher education institutions that would be more comprehensive and multidisciplinary (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996). By the late 1990s, it became clear that the remaining 25 institutions did not have enough students to become viable self-sustainable institutions (South Africa Department of Education, 2008, as cited in South Africa Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). The integration addressed regional needs, sound educational practice, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness (South Africa Department of Basic Education, 2011). For this reason, in 2001, near the end of my four-year programme, the Boland College of Education became part of the Cape Technikon. It later amalgamated with other institutions to create the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Consequently, we could upgrade our Higher Education Diplomas to BEd by studying extra credits. We did not get any bursaries or scholarships, and we did not qualify for study loans during my early study years; therefore, I had to work on weekends and during the

holidays. I waitressed at two restaurants, counted money at Dion's, and, for the longest time, worked at a butchery.

During my undergraduate studies, I realised I only wanted to teach for about five years and then pursue something else within the field of education, like material development (which I loved) or writing textbooks. Strangely enough, I had never thought of becoming a lecturer. I also did not consider studying further as further studies were not offered at the institution and were not on the radar for educators then. Like several of my classmates, I did a short teaching stint doing supply teaching in London, England. It was a way to get more experience and more money. When I returned, I taught at a combined primary and high school in Tulbagh in the Boland region of the Western Cape for a few years (2002–2007). At Tulbagh High School, I taught different subjects for Grades 4 to 9, including Natural Science, Afrikaans, Life Orientation, and Arts and Culture. Like Wellington, Tulbagh has a rich history, including links with some of my ancestors. This history is evident when you walk down Church Street since all the buildings were renovated to their original form after a big earthquake hit the area in 1969.

I started my postgraduate studies during my fifth year of teaching at Tulbagh High School in 2007. First, I did a BEd Honours degree at the Wellington Campus of CPUT with Research Methods and Techniques, Theory of Education, Education Management, and History as my main subjects. By reconnecting with my alma mater and my lecturers, I received the opportunity to become a part-time lecturer at the CPUT for a while in 2008 and 2009. I thoroughly enjoyed lecturing in history education in the first and second years of the undergraduate degree (both Foundation and Intermediate Phase). Although standing in front of enormous classes of about 120 students was daunting, I greatly enjoyed lecturing. From the onset, I loved to break open the content, concepts, and skills so that the students could comprehend and apply them better. However, for financial reasons, I moved to a full-time position at the CPUT's Centre for Multigrade Education (CMGE). I mainly worked as a researcher, material developer, and in-service educator trainer. CMGE was established in 2009 through a Dutch grant to develop frameworks and policies for quality instruction and

learning in multigrade education (Van As, 2011). In addition, CMGE aimed to develop the capacity to make a difference in the chances of success for rural primary school children. Between April 2009 and February 2011 (and even part-time after that), I trained multigrade educators all over South Africa – from the rural areas of Mpumalanga and Northwest to the Free State and Western Cape rural areas. In addition, we offered a short multigrade education course addressing aspects like classroom management, planning, and reading development. This experience was one of the best, as it opened my eyes to see the full extent of the circumstances and contexts in and around many South African classrooms. The buildings of the farm schools were old and neglected. Several schools were without electricity. I am still scared of pit latrines after some dodgy experiences. The available time-on-task was limited, as students often arrived late to school. This tardiness was primarily a result of the significant distances they had to cover on foot to reach the school.

Additionally, some of their time was allocated to participating in the essential school feeding programme. In addition, many educators only had a one or two-year teaching diploma. They struggled with an overloaded curriculum, insufficient teaching and learning resources, and many other challenges.

During my tenure at CMGE, I simultaneously pursued my postgraduate studies by enrolling in a master's degree programme in education, which was also completed at CPUT. My research within this programme was centred on developing and utilising teaching and learning materials designed explicitly for multigrade schools. The title of my master's dissertation was "An investigation of the development and use of teaching and learning materials in multigrade schools in the Wellington Magisterial District". In 2010, I started reading for a PhD in multimedia learning in multigrade schools (also at CPUT) but stopped midway due to working constraints and other personal reasons (for one, I had resigned from my job at CMGE). Usually, I would never admit to my failure to finish something, but the knowledge I gained from completing it was relevant to my later career and this study. In addition, my interest in deeper thinking and understanding of online learning stayed with me.

Slowly but surely, the only thing I wanted to do was to be a lecturer, especially in history education. Moreover, I felt that lecturing in History and History Education was something I could do well. Soon, I got the excellent opportunity to be a lecturer again, but this time in Geography, Education, and Professional Studies. In July 2017, I became a full-time lecturer at the then-new Two Oceans Graduate Institute (TOGI), a private higher education institution specialising in educator education. At TOGI, the BEd programme (Intermediate Phase) began in July 2017 with a blended and flipped classroom approach: online learning during the week and face-to-face contact sessions on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. The contact time in the blended and flipped classroom approach was an efficient platform for fostering interaction and engagement between the students and me and between the students and the educational content. I believe that the contact sessions also resulted in relationships being built. Soon after the first intake of students, distance students enrolled, and TOGI went entirely online to be more inclusive.

The transition to fully online educator education resulted in several challenges in facilitating interaction and engagement. There were limited chances to establish connections between the students and me and the students themselves. The distance and the transaction (the understanding between two or more parties) were evident. As a lecturer, I felt isolated, alone (we worked from home), uncertain, and concerned. Consequently, I was uncertain whether the students effectively progressed in my History and History Education modules in the BEd programme at TOGI. I wondered what they were thinking and whether they were, in fact, really learning, despite my becoming quite knowledgeable about online learning and the use of software such as Moodle®. I reflected on my practice and questioned if my students could be the history educators that I aspired them to be. Was I doing it right? Or was I doing it wrong? Was I overcoming the distance between the students and me?

It was not only online learning that created such mixed emotions. History and History Education caused various distances, including transactional and historical distances. From my experience as a child, a student, an educator, a lecturer, and a South African, I experienced

transactional and historical distance in varying degrees in history, history education, and learning about the past.

Rationale and Motivation for this Study

Various reasons motivated me to explore transactional and historical distances in history education related to my lived experience. First, there was the professional rationale behind conducting this research. My background was in primary education. Although I was trained as an Intermediate and Senior Phase educator and taught for a few years, I also spent several years in higher education as a lecturer in educator education. Despite several years in this field, I found myself in the strange and unfamiliar world of online learning for educator education. I was curious about the distances I had experienced in history education. Since I regularly employ reflective practices, I have always thought about improving my practice online as a history and history education lecturer. History, being an abstract subject, led to considerable distances. I realised that I did not have the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills about these distances. I also realised that no maps indicated the routes or bridges in this unfamiliar world of online learning and history education to indicate the route to cross these unique distances. An American author, Larsen (2009), wrote that a map forms bridges between spaces, disparate ideas we did not know were connected. A map is not merely a chart. A map unlocks and formulates meaning. Therefore, I set out to explore the distances I had experienced to create a map of the layout of the spaces and how to connect the spaces I was exploring.

In his book, *Psychical [sic] distance as a factor in art and an aesthetic principle*, Bullough (1912) compares physical distances with fog at sea. It can be an unpleasant experience and produce feelings of anxiety and fear. Nevertheless, fog at sea can also provide a source of delight and pleasure. Bullough (1912, p. 89) states that “this contrast, often emerging with suddenness, is like a momentary switching on of some new current, or the passing ray of a brighter light, illuminating the outlook upon perhaps the most ordinary and familiar objects”. I could not ignore the difference in outlook when I reflected on the distances

I was experiencing when looking at history education (in a sense, not leaning towards anxieties and other similar emotions). However, despite Bullough's advice, I could not separate myself from the objects and their appeal. It was Bullough's words (1912, p. 89) that resonated with me as I set out on my journey:

The distance appears to lie between our self and its affections, using the latter term in its broadest sense as anything which affects our being, bodily or spiritually, e.g., as sensation, perception, emotional state or idea ... The distance between ourselves and objects is the source or vehicle of such affections.

The research conducted by Endacott et al. (2020) demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the uniqueness of our narratives. Likewise, I recognised the distinctiveness of my own life story. Consequently, this recognition allowed me to contemplate the evolution (or lack thereof) in the teaching and learning of history and what we need to take into account to remain up-to-date with future advancements. Over the past four decades, history education has employed three primary approaches when viewing history as collective memory: disciplinary history, socio-cultural history, and postmodern and critical history (Seixas, 2000, as cited in Endacott et al., 2020). According to Endacott et al. (2020), some of these historical approaches exerted varying degrees of influence on me and dictated what and how I should learn about the past. Despite the emergence of new approaches in history education, the collective memory perspective has maintained its dominance over the past four decades despite the challenges presented by newer methodologies (Endacott et al., 2020). Consequently, we have all been shaped by the perspective of history as a collective memory, as highlighted in their research. Moreover, these diverse historical orientations also mirror the evolution of approaches to history education throughout three generations of academics in this field (Endacott et al., 2020).

We should also consider the transition from Piaget's developmental approach to a constructivist one in history education (Endacott et al., 2020). Although not explicitly focusing on history education, Moore (2022) argues that approaching learning as a social activity

enables educators to achieve more than they could have in a traditional classroom setting. Consequently, virtual classes can be structured similarly to traditional classes within institutional frameworks. According to Jung (2019, as cited in Moore, 2022), this shift gained momentum and found its theoretical foundation in the widely disseminated constructivist theory.

The study of historical thinking experienced a substantial shift during the 1980s and 1990s, particularly within the disciplinary approach to a history education framework. The contributions of scholars like Wineburg in the late 20th century compelled numerous educators to delve into the subject-specific cognitive processes integral to acquiring historical knowledge (Endacott et al., 2020). Historical thinking was then perceived as an active process involving the construction of knowledge about the past rather than merely the capacity to recall historical facts. This perspective shift was outlined in their research findings.

I was also sharing this new and unfamiliar world of online learning with several other public and private institutions, both residential and distant, especially from 2020 with the onset of COVID-19. Interestingly, local and international experts in online learning emerged worldwide, and many online webinars and seminars were offered to help lecturers transition to online learning. Many aspects of these webinars and workshops were quick fixes or emergency procedures, especially regarding technology and software options. However, I was concerned about the proposed best practices and their effectiveness due to the lack of relevant research and theoretical foundations. I was afraid that current higher education practices in educator education were technology-driven instead of being rooted in theoretical foundations. This concern was especially related to higher education, degree courses, pre-service educator education, and history educators' education. Ultimately, therefore, I aim to increase the effectiveness of training student educators for history education in the 21st century.

Since starting this study, I have realised that I have experienced distances related to history education. This overall experience of varying degrees of distance in history education complicates matters since these distances also affect who I am, my knowledge, understanding

and skills, and how I perceive the current distance I am experiencing. Although it might not be what Seixas (2002) intended, Yilmaz (2007) stresses that awareness of how the past is made meaningful, accessible, and comprehensible is necessary to develop historical consciousness in classrooms and confront the complexity of the past. Additionally, as a history education lecturer, I must comprehend the nature of history in order to proficiently devise, execute, and evaluate history education programmes (Yilmaz, 2007).

Besides a professional motivation, there was also a personal rationale for conducting this study. Both the professional and the personal rationales are closely linked. Being a history education lecturer is a part of who I am. I am also what I do and what I think. Essentially, I needed to overcome my isolation and concern about the distances. Even though I felt more academic isolation due to the physical or geographical distance between my students and me, it also influenced my well-being. The uncertainty and unfamiliarity caused me distress and sometimes woke me up at night.

As a lifelong student, I was also motivated to contribute to knowledge and understanding of transactional distance and historical distance in history education and online educator education, especially within the qualitative, interpretive paradigm. Furthermore, I wanted to contribute to autoethnography, which yields many opportunities for education research, educators, and history education.

Focus and Purpose of this Research

This autoethnography has explored transactional distance and historical distance in history education to understand the phenomenon, especially the factors influencing these distances. It aimed to improve my understanding of the factors from a transactional distance and the historical distance that influences history education to apply what I understand about history education later. Therefore, I traced my journey to history education, the transactional distance I experienced in the past, and the transactional distance I still experience.

My Research Questions

Like any qualitative research endeavour, the initial step involved formulating a research question that accurately encapsulated the research's central focus (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). Furthermore, the question had to align with the essence of autoethnography, which entails delving into a cultural matter through one's narrative and culminating in cultural analysis. As you develop your research question, you ask yourself what phenomenon you want to address and what you want to learn through your study. The answers to these questions helped me to formulate my study's research question (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022).

My primary research question initially emerged from my experiences in history education and as a history education lecturer at TOGI, a private higher education institution with an online mode of delivery. My experiences motivated me to ask the following research questions and, consequently, to find answers to these questions:

1. What factors influence transactional and historical distances from an autoethnography account and perspective in history education?
2. How do lived experiences influence transactional and historical distances from an autoethnography account and perspective in history education?

In other words, what could I learn about transactional and historical distance by exploring history education in my own life?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of this Study

From the outset, the theory of transactional distance was selected as the foundational framework for this study, given its prominence in the field of distance education, although my research involved including broader views drawn from my lived experience. The theory of transactional distance posits that the psychological and communication gaps between educators and students are never static, especially considering that transactional distance is a continuous and evolving concept rather than a distinct or discrete variable (Moore, 1997). As a result, potential misunderstandings can occur in this space and between the educator's

and student's inputs (Moore, 1991, 1997). However, if significant, deliberate, and planned learning occurs, this distance can be overcome by educators, students, and institutions (Moore, 1991).

In developing the theory of transactional distance, Moore (1997) pinpoints three key factors that impact transactional distance: structure, dialogue, and student autonomy. These factors can be conceptualised as spaces or gaps between various stakeholders, including the educator and students, students and the course content, students and online learning tools, students and their peers, and students and diverse perspectives. The initial set of factors, referred to as structure, encompasses the design elements of the course, including how it is organised and delivered across different platforms and communication channels. Subsequently, educators and students engage in dialogue, the second set of factors, during their interactions, where educators provide instruction and students respond. Finally, the third set of factors, student autonomy, pertains to the degree of control a student exerts over their learning processes. Despite these three sets of factors of transactional distance, Moore (1991, 1997, 2018) refers to numerous other factors that influence transactional distance. These aspects relate to the educator and the students as well as other factors, such as the content (in my case, history).

Historical distance cannot be boiled down to a singular problem or concept, such as a detached observation made possible by time. Instead, it should be viewed as a metaphor employed in diverse intellectual contexts. Consequently, we should examine a broader range of interactions that shape our connection with the past, encompassing activities like creating, experiencing, acting, and comprehending.

There exists a noticeable research gap in the domain of history education, particularly within the realms of transactional and historical distances, especially when considering the context of autoethnography.

Core Concept Clarification

The title “Exploring transactional and historical distances in history education: An autoethnography” and the central tenets of this study include several carefully chosen words which require some clarification at this stage. Since concept clarification is essential to theory and conceptual development, I unpack the concepts alphabetically for the reader’s conceptual understanding. I frequently used the following concepts, not only in The Entry Hall of this study but also in the other rooms.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative research and writing method aimed at comprehensively examining personal experiences to gain insight into cultural experiences (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005). Consequently, I adopt a deeply personalised writing style, leveraging my own experiences to enhance my comprehension of a particular societal phenomenon (Wall, 2006).

I introduce autoethnography as a research approach in this room but present it in more detail in the next room of this research.

Cabinets of Curiosities

In this study, I use the concept of a cabinet of curiosities to display my lived experience of the distances in history education. A cabinet of curiosities stores and exhibits various unusual objects and artefacts, particularly leaning towards the rare, eclectic, and esoteric (Galambosova, 2022). It is a personal collection of fascinating objects exhibited within a room or a customised wooden cabinet. The term “cabinet” initially described a private room in a house or a palace instead of a specific type of furniture as it is known today. Whether there is a room or a cabinet full of objects, the selection of objects reveals a world in miniature (Mauriès, 2019) to tell a story about a newly discovered world and to understand our place in this world (Evans & Blair, 2016). The stories that the collections and collectors conveyed in the past often related to discovering new worlds during the Age of Exploration and the

subsequent trading (and colonisation). The stories place the collector, owner, or creator centre stage, owning the knowledge in the eyes of the viewer (from here on, I merely refer to “the collector”). Thus, in many ways, the collection reflects the identity of its collector, like a self-portrait or a selfie.

Cabinets of curiosities are also known by their German and Italian names. In German, *wunderkammers* (rooms of wonder) or *kunstkammers* (rooms of art) were collections of marvellous things (Mauriès, 2019). During the Italian Renaissance, a *studiolo* (a little studio) was a small private room dedicated to reading, studying (contemplation), and writing (Mauriès, 2019). I used the term “cabinets of curiosities” throughout this thesis for brevity. Indeed, cabinet of curiosities is often used interchangeably with *wunderkammer* or *kunstkammer*. These collections were closely linked and frequently combined within a single space, blurring the lines between them and making them virtually indistinguishable.

In contemporary art, museums, storytelling, and research, cabinets of curiosities have experienced a resurgence, reflecting the evolving material and visual culture of recent times (Evans & Blair, 2016). The objects in these modern displays connect and reflect, embodying elements of the personal “self”, which is the gateway to autoethnography practice (Evans & Blair, 2016). As in premodern times, the objects are significant and hold personal meaning to the collector (Evans & Blair, 2016). Nevertheless, the liminal objects still require an explanation because they are not transparent (MacLure, 2006) and must lead to discussions. The viewer strives to find their connection to the objects. Today, cabinets of curiosities are used to impress and entertain since there is still a yearning for wonder.

I briefly introduce my cabinets in this chapter but expand more in the next room, The Lobby.

Explore

In the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word “explore” finds its root in Latin with *ex* (meaning out of, search out or from) and *ploro* or *plorare* (meaning I cry out, I lament, set up a loud cry, or utter a cry). In general, explore is used as a verb to investigate, study, analyse,

delve into, look into, and become familiar with the subject or study area. Exploring is used for discovery, like geographical discovery and exploring unknown countries in the past. In the past, exploration meant the geographical discovery of areas previously unknown to the explorers and the society to which they belonged (Thesiger, 1993). When exploring a new space or place, people want to see exciting things and get to know the area and its people. Thus, exploration refers to all activities that gather information about the environment (Berlyne, 1966).

The original Latin root seems like a far cry from the standard working definitions of the word explore, but we can see the link on further investigation. In the 16th century, *explorare* was used to describe the act of hunting, during which the hunter would shout out loudly, forcing the animal to move in a specific direction and come out of hiding. This hunting technique is a visible endeavour intended to move the hunted animal out of the darkness towards a place where it is visible (Montenegro, 2015), from the unknown to the known.

In qualitative research, we can capture the fundamental essence of this initial annotation. The primary goal of exploratory research in a study is to shed light on a previously obscure or unclear area, essentially bringing it into understanding and clarity. As a result, areas under investigation in exploratory research tend to be relatively unexplored and not well-understood at the outset. Exploratory research, in essence, is conducted when researchers are confronted with an ambiguous problem, and they embark on exploration when they possess limited or no established scientific knowledge or comprehension about the group, process, activity, or situation they aim to investigate. However, they believe that the subject of study holds valuable elements waiting to be uncovered (Stebbins, 2011).

When we refer to exploration and cabinets of curiosities, we cannot exclude a focus on curiosity since it is the first step to exploration. Consequently, curiosity is a prerequisite for exploration (Berlyne, 1966). For this reason, an explorer actively channels their curiosity and eagerly embark on a journey into uncharted territory and the unknown (Leadership Academy, n.d.). Curiosity is a solid, intrinsic, and eager desire, thirst, or need for living beings to know,

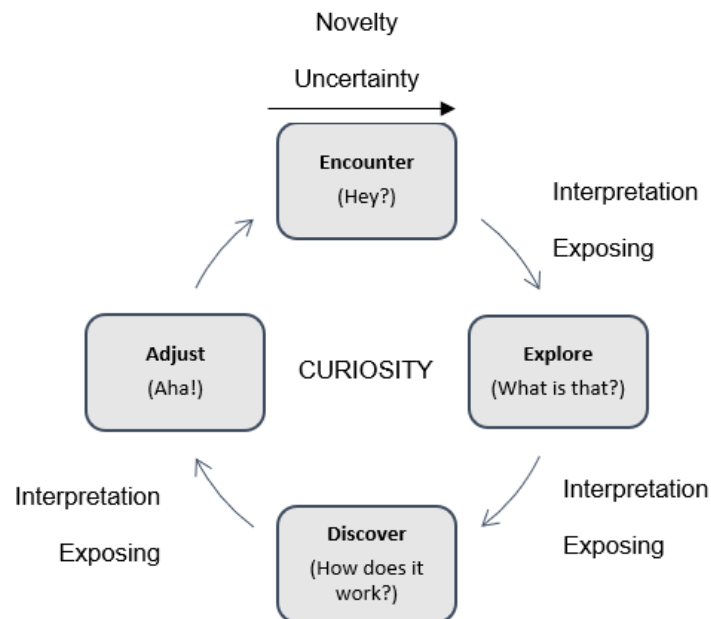
learn, see, experience, or understand something (Deci, 1975; Edelman, 1997; Litman, 2007; Tieben et al., 2011).

The fundamental purpose of curiosity lies in the desire to acquire knowledge, explore, and become deeply engaged in the activity that initially triggered the allocation of attentional resources. This insight is drawn from Loewenstein's work (1994, as cited in Kashdam et al., 2009). Additionally, Loewenstein (1994, as cited in Tieben et al., 2011) clarifies that curiosity represents a human inclination to make sense of the world, particularly about unexpected phenomena that defy explanation. Moreover, curiosity embodies people's inclination to push their capabilities to the limit. According to Kashdam et al. (2009), curiosity can be defined as the recognition, acceptance, and pursuit of knowledge and novel experiences with an open and receptive mindset, along with a readiness to explore events that are ambiguous, unusual, strange, or uncertain.

The sequence of curiosity, known as the curiosity process, results in positive subjective experiences and personal growth (Berlyne, 1966). This process commences with an increased allocation of attention to identify and align with novel and challenging stimuli. It is then followed by a cognitive and behavioural exploration of rewarding stimuli, leading to an immersive engagement with them and associated activities, and finally integrating new experiences that occur through either assimilation or accommodation (Berlyne, 1966). Building on the work of Berlyne in 1960, Loewenstein (1994), and Kashdan et al. (2004), Tieben et al. (2011) visualised the connection between these principles and the roles they play in the exploratory process, which can be seen in Figure 1.8.

Figure 1.8

The explorative process of curiosity



Note. The curiosity process of encountering, exploring, discovering, and adjusting. This process is initiated by novelty, uncertainty and conflict and driven by interpretation and exposure (Berlyne, 1966).

History

For most people, history refers to everything that happened in the past – every thought, action and event, thus, the entire scope of human existence (Salevouris & Furay, 2015). However, for this study, I want to focus on the second meaning of history, that is, the account of the past (Salevouris & Furay, 2015) or what is inferred by the evidence left behind (Waters, 2000, p. 12, as cited in Fairbanks, 2021). These accounts are presented in articles, books, and lectures, and they rely on fragmented historical records as their primary evidence. To establish a connection with the past, albeit with limited access, only specific segments of the past were carefully chosen, thoroughly analysed, and then interpreted (Furay & Salevouris, 2000, as cited in Fairbanks, 2021). As a result, history encompasses the events that transpired in the past and the process of meticulously selecting, critically analysing, and effectively

documenting those events (Davidson & Lytle, 2000). History, then, is something that is done and constructed.

Historical Distance

Historical distance cannot be boiled down to a single, discrete problem or concept such as a detached observational stance made attainable by time. Instead, it can be characterised as a metaphor employed across intellectual contexts, including the gap between the current time when historians write and the bygone eras they research (De Bruijn, 2014; Den Hollander et al., 2011). Therefore, we look at a broader set of engagements (making, feeling, doing, and understanding) mediating our relationship with the past.

Primary School History Education

The school system in South Africa can be divided into different sections (see Table 1.1). First, the Pre-Primary Phase focuses on students younger than six years. After that, there are two phases in primary schools: The Foundation Phase consists of Grades R to 3 (ages 6 to 9), and the Intermediate Phase comprises Grades 4 to 7. Even though Grade 7 is part of the Senior Phase, it often forms part of primary schools. The Senior Phase (Grades 8 and 9) and the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase (Grades 10 to 12) are part of high schools (also called secondary schools). While there are a few elements of History in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) as part of Life Skills (beginner knowledge), History is more formally introduced in the school curriculum in Grade 4. From Grade 4, History and Geography are part of Social Sciences. Therefore, the word “primary” refers to history education in primary school.

Table 1.1*The structure of History Education in South Africa*

Phase	Grades	Ages	Presence of History in the CAPS Curriculum
Foundation Phase	R – 3	6 – 9	History forms a small section of Life Skills (Beginner Knowledge)
Intermediate Phase	4 – 6	9 – 12	History and Geography are part of Social Sciences (compulsory)
Senior Phase	7 – 9	12 – 15	History and Geography are part of Social Sciences (compulsory)
Further Education and Training Phase	10 - 12	15 – 18	History (elective)

In the past, history education primarily emphasised the acquisition of historical content through the memorisation of facts (Bharath, 2015). However, in recent times, the approach to learning in history education has transformed to encompass a focus on reasoning. Students are encouraged to engage with diverse historical facts and narratives from the past, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills, as mentioned by Bharath (2015). Students study history to gain insight into their world and comprehend the forces, movements, and events that have shaped it. They approach the past by working with historical sources, similar to the way historians work. Through the study of history, students acquire the specific skills used by historians, leading to the development of various abilities, including analytical and critical thinking.

Historical research primarily investigates what transpired, when, where, and why, and the resulting consequences, effects, and impacts (De Bivar Black, 2020). De Bivar Black (2020) notes that no other school subject besides History delves into these specific inquiries. Students also learn to distinguish between facts, memories, interpretations, and perspectives and how to recognise propaganda and discern fake news, which are essential skills to have (De Bivar Black, 2020).

This approach to history and history education, which draws inspiration from historical thinking, provides a clear understanding of what it means to possess knowledge and comprehension of the past and delineates the roles of educators and students in the

educational context (Thorp & Persson, 2020). As students delve into historical exploration, it becomes essential to consider both the outcomes of historical inquiry and the process itself (VanSledright, 2002). Proficient history educators should acknowledge the distinct skills required for conducting a historical inquiry and try to grasp them, as Bennett (2014) advocates. Approaching history education from a historical thinking perspective positions history as an academic discipline. It places its methods for evaluating the accuracy of narratives at the forefront of the history education agenda (Thorp & Persson, 2020).

A pivotal aspect of this approach is the pursuit of scientifically verifiable and valid historical accounts. It involves guiding students to apply a predefined method and a specific mode of thinking to historical narratives to assess them based on established criteria (Thorp & Persson, 2020). Thorp and Persson (2020) acknowledge that knowledge and disciplinary skills in academic history serve as a benchmark that individual students (as well as educators) should strive to approach.

In doing so, history students understand historical phenomena and appreciate “the importance of the historical dimension in any issue they come to consider through their lives” (De Bivar Black, 2020, p. 6). This way, students develop more profound levels of historical understanding when they can consciously use their assumptions and prior knowledge about the past (even if it is limited or naive) to investigate it in-depth (VanSledright, 2002).

History is a distinct school subject that is crucial in equipping us with the essential insights needed to comprehend the present critically. This is achieved by instructing students that any past facet must be analysed within its historical context, thus emphasising that historical interpretation is a subject of ongoing debate (De Bivar Black, 2020). Consequently, history education entails exploring the link between the past and the present by examining historical events through the viewpoints of individuals who lived during the same era as the subject of study and those who lived later but succeeded in the historical subject. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the past and its impact on contemporary society. This approach allows students to employ creativity to construct a multifaceted understanding of the past.

As a result, students acquire a deeper understanding of their own lives and those of their families and communities (De Bivar Black, 2020). This deeper comprehension is facilitated by history education, which enables students to organise and process diverse information systematically. Moreover, this approach prepares students to comprehend the nature of historical knowledge and the processes involved in its construction. Additionally, it nurtures an awareness of how this knowledge evolves over generations through dialogues encompassing the three dimensions of time: the past, the present, and the future.

One of the notable contributions of history education is its role in democratising citizenship, as De Bivar Black (2020) emphasises. Historical knowledge aligns with the democratic knowledge essential for active citizenship. Mastery of historical knowledge and the skills of historical analysis equip students to engage more effectively in a democratic society. As a result, acquiring historical-critical knowledge and understanding political, socio-cultural, and economic systems intersect with cultivating democratic values essential for active citizenship.

Understanding what expertise entails in history education provides history educators with clear objectives for guiding their students towards a deeper grasp of historical thinking, assuming they aspire to enhance their students' proficiency in this area (VanSledright, 2004). Nevertheless, history education's identity, objectives, content, and structure at the school level have been the subject of extensive international debates. Recent discussions have been shaped by concerns surrounding national identity and integration. These discussions have placed notable emphasis on the utilisation of narratives and official accounts as instruments to promote national identity and foster unity, particularly in the face of political divisions (Grever & Stuurman, 2007; Nakou & Barca, 2010; Taylor & Guyver, 2011, as cited in Chapman et al., 2018).

The debate regarding the orientations of history education is also noticeable in South Africa (Kukard, 2017). Kukard identifies three distinct orientations within history education: memory history, analytical history, and critical history. In memory history orientation, the primary focus lies in teaching the national narrative, emphasising a nation's collective memory

and historical identity. The second orientation, analytical history, centres on the idea that history should equip students with analytical thinking and abilities. The third orientation, critical history, emphasises that history should empower students to engage in society actively.

Transaction

The concept of the transaction was initially derived from Dewey, who distinguished three forms of action (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Initially, Dewey used interaction to describe a form of action as a process where living is an “inclusive affair” that involves connection and interactions with what is within the organism and higher organisms that lie outside the organism in space and time (Dewey, 1981, p. 215, as cited in Garrison, 2001, p. 277). The following form of action, interaction, refers to a scenario in which one element or factor is interconnected with another, often involving a balance or reciprocal influence between the two. This interconnection can involve causal relationships and dependencies. Finally, interaction is replaced with transaction. Dewey and Bentley (1949, p. 108) define transaction as an involvement using systems of description and naming to address various aspects and stages of an action without ascribing them to individual, detachable entities, essences, or realities. It also avoids isolating relations from these detachable elements.

Other authors also reflected on what transaction means. Boyd and Apps (1980, p. 5) describe transactions as “connot[ing] the interplay among the environment, the individuals, and the patterns of behaviours in a situation”. Garrison (2001, p. 275) alludes to a “world without a within”, where existence is depicted as a continuous event that flows through an individual just as the individual flows through it. Consequently, we should perceive external and internal interactions as a unified functional transaction, representing a single overarching function with two interconnected subfunctions (Garrison, 2001). Moreover, explicating the transaction introduces even more intricate hermeneutic challenges and complexities. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the whole by understanding the parts and vice versa.

Transactional Distance

Transactional distance defines perceived psychological, cognitive, affective, communication, and pedagogical distances or gaps between students and educators in online learning because of geographical or physical distance (Moore, 1983, 1997; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Such distance can significantly influence learning engagement and achieve the desired learning objectives. The degree of transactional distance is primarily shaped by three key factors: structure, dialogue, and student autonomy. These elements collectively determine the extent of the transactional distance experienced in the educational process (Moore, 1991, 1997; Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

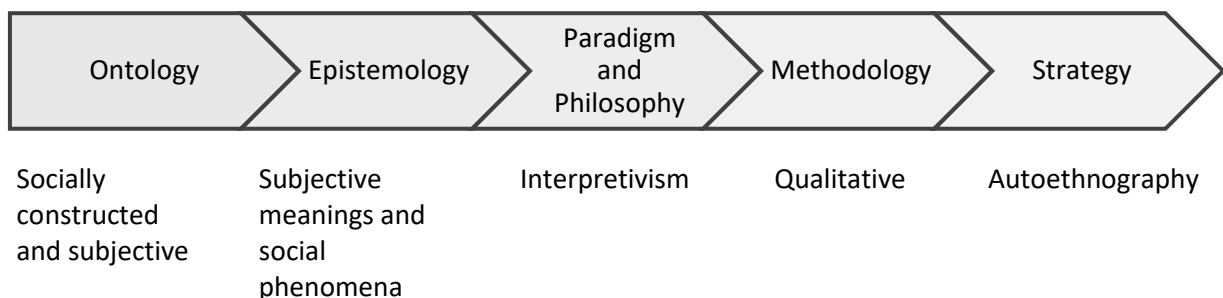
Transactional distance and historical distance form the theoretical foundation of this study. I introduce it in The Entry Hall but provide more background to this study's theoretical and conceptual framework later.

Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, I provide a brief introduction to the selected research design and methodology. A more comprehensive discussion and explanation of my research design and methodology is presented in Chapter 2 (refer to Figure 1.9 for an overview).

Figure 1.9

The elements of my research design and methodology



I opted for a qualitative methodology and an interpretative paradigm as the guiding framework for this research. When there is a need to investigate and comprehend a phenomenon, especially when there is limited existing research, a qualitative approach is

considered appropriate (Creswell, 2014). For Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a method for investigating and comprehending the meaning and significance that individuals or groups ascribe to a particular human issue. An interpretive paradigm emphasises that all human beings are part of making sense of their worlds. It is also described as a systematic study of socially meaningful action through careful observation of people in their natural settings (Neuman, 2014).

Autoethnography is a research method that seeks to systematically analyse personal experiences (the “auto” part) to gain insights into broader cultural experiences (the “ethno” part). The term “graphy” in autoethnography refers to systematically studying and documenting these personal experiences to better understand their cultural significance (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005). Consequently, I drew inspiration from the fields of autobiography and ethnography, as suggested by Ellis (2004) and Jones (2005), to examine the social world through the lens of my lived experience. This contemporary and still-evolving qualitative research approach serves as both a process and an outcome, enabling me to write in a highly personalised manner (Wall, 2006).

I used metaphorical and virtual cabinets of curiosities to construct the data in this exploration. As part of the data construction, from personal memory, I wrote about my epiphanies, the moments perceived to have had a considerable effect on my life and which resonated with the focus of this study (Ellis et al., 2011). I employed various strategies to assist with the self-discovery process (or the awakening of epiphanies), like engaging with artefacts (objects, photographs, and documents), conducting semi-structured interviews with family members and students, self-reflection, self-observation, field notes, and site visits.

Finally, I used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to analyse my cabinets of curiosities for this study since this approach focuses on people’s views, opinions, knowledge, and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2020). According to Braun and Clarke (2020), RTA also underscores the significance of the researcher’s perspective as a valuable analytical tool and their reflective involvement with the theory, data, and interpretation.

Outline of the Research

I have introduced myself and my autoethnography in this chapter, The Entry Hall, by providing the background, context, focus, purpose, and research questions. This first room also included an introduction to the theoretical and conceptual framework, the literature review, and the research design and methodology, which will be extensively elaborated upon in this research.

This autoethnographic study has five more rooms, as summarised in Figure 1.1 at the beginning of this chapter. The description of the research design and methodology can be found in the second section, which serves as The Lobby. In that section, you will find an elaborate explanation of the research design (autoethnography), the chosen research paradigm (interpretivism), the research approach (qualitative), and the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study. The data collection and construction process encompasses internal and external methods, with data analysis conducted through RTA. Furthermore, the section addresses quality assurance measures and ethical considerations and acknowledges the limitations of the study.

In the foundational sections, Chapters 3 and 4, my focus centres on the study's theoretical and conceptual framework, particularly on Moore's transactional and historical distance theory. Following this, the literature review takes precedence, wherein I dedicate attention to the primary existing literature concerning autoethnography, the theory of transactional distance, and historical distance. This serves to outline the current research gaps within the respective fields.

"The Cabinets of Curiosity" room, with three curiosity cabinets, focuses on the construction of my data collection. In this chapter, the cabinets are interpreted, analysed, and discussed narratively. I conclude the study in the last room, "Sitting Around the Kitchen Table". You will find an overview, a discussion of the key findings, and responses to the research questions posed in this chapter. Additionally, there is a reflective examination of the research

methodology employed and the contribution to the knowledge domains. Finally, the section concludes with recommendations for future research endeavours.

Conclusion to the Entry Hall

In my first chapter, The Entry Hall, I introduced my autoethnography by providing the background and the context of this study. Then, I revealed this study's rationale, motivation, focus, purpose, and research questions. The Entry Hall also introduced the theoretical and conceptual framework (the foundation), core concept clarifications, and the research design and methodology. Finally, I provided an outline of the other study rooms. The next room, The Lobby, explores the details of the research design and methodology of this autoethnography.

die skaapstrappe pad. Dit is toe dat oupa die perde hoor
 en die karwiel. ^{hoor} Hy herken toe die perdekar wat aankom,
 die perde op 'n vinnige stap. Hy herken ook die drie mans.
 "Naand julle, liefderike weer, ne?" Niemand groet nie.
 "Die vrou het warm koffie, wil julle nie aankom nie?" Silie
 die skaap hond kom om die hok van die kraal, steek vier voet vas
 toe hy die perdekar sien en die hare reis op sy rug. Toe
 gaar hy 'n ^{grootte} draak in veldwijn stap tussen die perde die
 wart op huis toe. So knyp-knyp soos iemand met groot nood.
 "Wil julle nie afklim nie" Ura oupa waar, ^{herken} maar die drie donker
 figure op die kar kyk nie eens na hom nie. Op 'n vinnige stap
 gaan hulle verby, windop na waar die perde ramm oor
 die vloer.

Chapter 2

The Lobby

*"We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of
 all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and
 know the place for the first time."*

- T. S. Eliot from *Four Quartets* in *Collected Poems*
 1909-1962

CHAPTER 2: THE LOBBY – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction to The Lobby

Before entering The Lobby, I want to remind the reader of the purpose and questions of this research. This autoethnography focuses on exploring transactional and historical distances in history education, especially the factors influencing these distances; therefore, I asked the following two research questions:

1. What factors influence transactional and historical distances from an autoethnography account and perspective in history education?
2. How do lived experiences influence transactional and historical distances from an autoethnography account and perspective in history education?

A significant portion of autoethnographic research typically comprises a reconstructed narrative, which we label as the outcomes. While employing a narrative style in journalism can evoke strong emotions and provide readers with valuable insights, it can also potentially perplex them in two fundamental areas: understanding the research methodology and assessing the credibility of the findings (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). To address this issue, I intend to introduce my research design and methodology early in this study, departing from the conventional thesis structure.

Incorporating the research design and methodology within The Lobby not only bolsters the rigour and replicability of the study but also facilitates the development of meta-studies that incorporate autoethnographies, ultimately enhancing the broader applicability of the research (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). Cooper and Lilyea (2022) recommend incorporating procedural information for readers to understand how a researcher arrived at their narrative and comprehensive cultural analysis that respects the ethnographic elements inherent in this methodology. This is precisely what I have undertaken in this context.

The outline of this research is a house design – leading from one room to the next. In this chapter, we are in The Lobby (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1

The Lobby



While it may be unconventional for a second chapter, in *The Lobby* (as depicted in Figure 2.1), I provide an overview of the philosophical underpinnings (ontology and epistemology) that guided my research, as well as the research paradigm and approach employed in this study. Consequently, I define autoethnography as a research methodology and elaborate on the methods used to collect, mould, analyse, and interpret the data that led to the generation of distinctive findings. In conclusion, I outline the measures I implemented to validate the credibility of my results and the ethical factors I took into account.

Research Design

Interpretative Research Framework

Paradigms are essentially foundational belief systems or viewpoints rooted in assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and the approaches used to study these aspects (methodology) (Pitard, 2017). I selected an

interpretative paradigm for the foundation of this research, as it underscored the idea that individuals continuously play a role in understanding their environments. People consistently decipher, shape, and ascribe significance to clarify, validate, and explain their behaviours (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). While the interpretive framework is characterised as a meticulous exploration of socially significant behaviours through close observation of individuals in their natural environments (Neuman, 2014), I carefully observed myself and my lived experience of distances in history education, both past and present. Hence, within this perspective, I sought to comprehend the world where I reside and operate (Creswell, 2007; Lather, 2006).

Interpretivism supports researchers like me in exploring my world of history education by interpreting my understanding of my experiences throughout the years. These experiences are pivotal in shaping and influencing the researcher's understanding of the data they collect and construct (Tranh & Trinh, 2015). Thus, the researcher's role is to grasp how meaning is constructed in the given setting; for me, it pertains to my upbringing in history education, as these constructions form the social realities (Neuman, 2014). This understanding confirms my epistemological stance of interpretivism, that is, seeking and interpreting my social world and culture (Higgs, 2001, as cited in Pitard, 2017).

Bailey (2007) and Henning (2004) articulate that in the interpretative paradigm, the ontological viewpoint recognises that knowledge is a product of individual and social construction by those actively engaged in the research process. As a result, various realities exist. From this ontological viewpoint, the interpretative paradigm recognises the presence of such subjective realities. This paradigm focuses on discovering the researcher's and the participants' numerous constructed perspectives (Henning, 2004; Lather, 2006; Subbiah, 2016). Therefore, the interpretative paradigm seeks to grasp individuals' viewpoints regarding their actual life encounters rather than pursuing an objective concept of those experiences (Subbiah, 2016). In the interpretive paradigm, the dialogic discourse creates reality and communications as transactions (Lather, 2006). The understanding of reality is shaped by culture and influenced by historical context (Lather, 2006; Moon & Blackman, 2014).

The interpretative research paradigm promotes the concept that the researcher and the social context mutually influence each other, impacting the researcher's values, findings, and perspectives (Ormston et al., 2014; Pitard, 2017). The paradigm also implies that the values researchers hold are embedded throughout all stages of the research process. As Pitard (2017) indicates, through my interactions with my key participants, namely parents, educators, and lecturers in history education, my viewpoints and values inevitably shaped my understanding, rendering complete objectivity and absence of bias unattainable.

The analysis of the selected paradigm delves deeper into the understanding and interpretation of how individuals construct and sustain their social environment. Consequently, my research, which was grounded in the interpretive paradigm, yielded detailed descriptive insights emphasising a profound, interpretative grasp of social occurrences (Subbiah, 2016). Furthermore, dialogues and interactions between the researcher and the participants shed light on the research outcomes (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Pitard, 2017). Hence, as the researcher, I was both a student and an educator; therefore, the research findings were revealed through dialogue with myself and other research methods.

The Research Approach: Qualitative Research

The interpretive paradigm, the chosen methodology, and the qualitative means of gathering data are closely intertwined and interrelated (Tranh & Tranh, 2015). Researchers employing the interpretive paradigm and qualitative techniques seek out individuals' perceptions, insights, and experiences as data sources to reveal the truth instead of depending solely on numerical data or statistics. For this reason, I chose qualitative research as my approach since it was best suited to address my research phenomenon while speaking to my paradigm (Creswell, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1994, as cited in Castellen, 2010) suggest that qualitative research consists of interpretive approaches that fluctuate based on dominant epistemological discussions; therefore, no specific approach precedes others. Qualitative research explores and understands the meanings ascribed to a human problem or a phenomenon like mine by individuals or groups (Creswell, 2014).

The aim of qualitative research, including my research, is to understand the meaning that individuals, including myself, attach to their experiences within a specific social context or situation (Chetty, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This approach does not seek to provide explanations or forecasts for human behaviour; instead, it aims to provide descriptions and insights into it, in line with the perspective of Babbie and Mouton (2001).

Bryman (2008) describes qualitative research as examining any social phenomenon. This research enabled the investigator to fully engage with the genuine environments of participants and communities to gain a deep understanding of their dynamics (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2, as cited in Slay, 2007).

In a qualitative approach, researchers are encouraged to engage in introspection about the beliefs and motivations they bring to their study and to evaluate how these elements might influence the outcomes of their research (Pitard, 2017; Ratner, 2002). For this reason, I was acutely mindful and reflective of the values and purpose behind my research and how they influenced its outcomes. Furthermore, this was the rationale behind opting for autoethnography, as it provides a more expansive viewpoint on the world, steering clear of strict boundaries that define what is deemed significant and worthy in research (Adams, 2005; Wood, 2009, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011).

Qualitative methodology offers an emic or insider viewpoint, providing insights into the insider’s perspective and lived experience (DePoy & Gitlin, 1994, as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Wicks & Whiteford, 2006). Qualitative researchers begin their studies by focusing on understanding human behaviour from the viewpoint of the individuals involved; this forms the foundation of their approach. The emic perspective follows the tradition of psychological investigations into popular or folk beliefs (Wundt, 1888, as cited in Morris et al., 1999). Furthermore, cultural anthropologists endeavour to comprehend a group or its culture from the perspective of that group itself (Malinowski, 1922, as cited in Morris et al., 1999). Chang (2008) discusses the native culture, noting that using autoethnography, researchers delve into

their indigenous culture as a nexus between themselves and others. Thus, gaining an insider's viewpoint is essential for comprehending how individuals, groups, or communities construct meaning related to a specific phenomenon (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006). My cabinets aimed to capture these emic (insider) perspectives and experiences, serving as my means of storing and displaying the diverse elements of my personal history education journey.

The qualitative researcher often draws on the metaphor of a bricoleur, that is, a person creating a bricolage, which is a crafted assortment of methods and practices meticulously assembled to address a specific problem within a real-world context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, as cited in Sharp, 2019). Subsequently, it evolves and adopts new shapes as we incorporate varied tools, strategies, and techniques into the mix. As a bricoleur or maker of quilts, the qualitative researcher uses the aesthetic and alloying strategies, methods, or nearby empirical materials of the craft. The Bricoleur method involves creating a Bricolage, a structure that emerges from examining all the objects at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991). The writer, as a bricoleur, is a craftsman, moulding significance from experience by utilising aesthetic and instrumental tools (Denzin, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) clarify that qualitative research employs diverse methods, as incorporating various methods enriches the research with precision, comprehensiveness, and depth. Therefore, a bricoleur deliberately mixes qualitative methods and ways of addressing a specific phenomenon (Association for Qualitative Research, 2021).

Researchers conducting qualitative and interpretive research are tasked with assembling varied depictions of a multifaceted scenario based on the gathered data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The creation evolves and adopts new shapes as the bricoleur employs varied tools, strategies, and techniques, enhancing it with representation and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Hence, the term "bricoleur" is employed in qualitative research to characterise practical and diverse strategies in qualitative investigation (Association for Qualitative Research, 2021).

In a contemporary sense, bricolage involves employing these methodological processes when we need them as the context unfolds in the research situation (Kincheloe et

al., 2018). This method entails the rigorous re-evaluation and reimagining of interdisciplinary research. By embracing this multi-perspective approach, individuals employing the bricoleur mindset introduce fresh perspectives into research and knowledge creation (Kincheloe, 2008, as cited in Sharp, 2019). Beyond the conventional mixed-method research approach, a bricolage tailors the most fitting research methodology to various parts of a single study. By adopting strategies in dynamic research contexts, as and when necessary, the researcher clearly conveys their social and political stances while formulating and implementing a methodology (Sharp, 2019). In a bricolage, we choose complementary approaches to enhance the research method, data collection, and analysis. As a bricoleur, a researcher consciously picks the most suitable methodology to strengthen the research process. While striving to unveil the diverse factors influencing our research narratives, bricolage underscores the connection between different perspectives and one's social context within the lived experience.

In the bricolage technique, we choose methods that harmonise with one another to bolster the research process, data gathering, and examination. As a bricoleur, a researcher meticulously picks the most suitable methodology to enhance the study (Sharp, 2019). While striving to unveil the myriad structures influencing our research tales, the bricolage emphasises the connection between perspectives and the social context of an individual's history (Kincheloe et al., 2018).

In a complex world, the bricoleur approaches research methods as an active endeavour, where they consciously craft their research methods using available tools rather than simply accepting predetermined, universally related methodologies (Kincheloe et al., 2018). Therefore, as a bricoleur, I was not a passive observer of the world but actively involved in its interpretation, bringing my experiences and intuition to it (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions and Philosophical Foundations

Ontology, which is the study of existence or being, primarily examines how humans acquire knowledge (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Ontology focuses on “what is” within the “nature of existence and the structure of reality” (Crotty, 2020, p. 10). Through ontology, researchers ascertain the level of certainty they hold regarding the essence and presence of their research (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Thus, researchers probe the veracity of their claims regarding reality, discern who determines the authenticity of what is real, and navigate the diverse and opposing conceptions of reality (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

In this research, I perceived my ontological assumptions as having been shaped socially and influenced by dialogues, experiences, or the perceptions of individuals (Higgs & Trede, 2009; Pitard, 2017). These assumptions encourage researchers to use words and visual elements to narrate and interpret individuals’ lived experiences and perspectives in real-life contexts (Higgs & Trede, 2009; Pitard, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe the ontological stance of constructivism as rooted in various intangible cognitive creations grounded socially and through experience. I gleaned from Pitard (2017) that my awareness, convictions, and comprehension of external reality were discernible solely within my cognitive realm. Hence, I shaped my interpretations through my social interactions, dialogues, and lived experiences (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Regarding ontology, an autoethnography practitioner recognises personal reality as a construct influenced by both psychological and social factors. The emphasis on internal perspectives, external influences, and individual agency differs across the spectrum of constructivism and social constructionism (Young & Collin, 2004, as cited in McIlveen, 2008). Thus, an autoethnographer presumes that reality and meaning are socially constructed through symbolic interaction, such as language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, in Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). This presumption empowers autoethnographers to challenge everyday statements regarding things or how they have always been (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). A researcher employing autoethnography might frame their narrative analysis as a personal

truth. However, throughout this procedure and its results, there is a concurrent recognition and articulation of the surrounding discourse, whether repressive or emancipatory (McIlveen, 2008).

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with comprehending the nature of knowledge and, specifically, how individuals acquire knowledge (Hofer, 2004; Pitard, 2017) or the examination of knowledge itself (Moon & Blackman, 2014). According to Crotty (2020), epistemology acts as a lens through which the researcher views and makes sense of the world. Thus, it encompasses knowledge and embodies a deep understanding of the nuances of knowledge (both the process and content of what we understand). Epistemology is significant in guiding researchers by shaping their investigations to uncover knowledge. It encompasses various dimensions of the validity, breadth, and approaches to acquiring knowledge. These dimensions include the definition of a valid knowledge assertion, how knowledge is gained or generated, and evaluating its applicability in different contexts (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

We can delve into epistemology and its impact on research design by examining the relationship between a subject and an object. In essence, constructionist epistemology rejects the idea of independently existing objective truths, proposing instead that truth or meaning emerges through our interactions with the realities of our world (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Instead of objective truths waiting to be uncovered, truth and meaning are created through our active engagement with the realities of the world around us. The interplay between the subject and the object leads to the creation of meaning, with the subject shaping the object's reality (Moon & Blackman, 2014). According to Crotty (2020), there is no inherent, objective truth awaiting our discovery; instead, we uncover truth and meaning through our interactions with the intricacies of our world. The world is not isolated from human actions or symbolic language (Moon & Blackman, 2014). As a result, Moon and Blackman (2014, p. 1172) emphasise the significance of constructionist research in producing "contextual understandings of a defined topic or problem" (or phenomenon). Hence, constructivists assert that there is no singular,

absolute reality or truth; instead, reality must be interpreted. For this reason, they will use qualitative methods to reach multiple realities.

The concept of epistemology and its influence on research design can be delved into by examining the interplay between a subject and its object (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Fundamentally, a constructionist epistemology challenges the idea of detached objective truths. Instead, it posits that truths or meanings are shaped by our engagements with the world around us (Moon & Blackman, 2014). This implies that meaning emerges from the interaction between the subject and the object, with the subject shaping the perceived reality of the object (Moon & Blackman, 2014). According to Crotty (2020), no objective truth is merely waiting to be uncovered – rather, truth or meaning surfaces because of our involvement with worldly realities. The tangible world does not exist without human action or symbolic expression (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

Consequently, Moon and Blackman (2014) underscore the significance of constructionist research, as it yields context-specific insights into a designated topic, issue, or phenomenon. Hence, constructivists contend that there is not a singular, fixed reality or truth; instead, reality demands interpretation. This drives them to employ qualitative methods to tap into diverse perspectives of reality (Patel, 2015).

Furthermore, we cannot disregard epistemology in autoethnography. As for the autoethnographer's epistemology, researchers opt for lived experience subjectivity and create meaning within comparative contexts (McIlveen, 2008). As a result, postmodern research frameworks recognise reality's fleeting and ever-changing nature while emphasising the importance of the interpersonal connections that ultimately mould and characterise our experiences (Pitard, 2017; Russell & Kelly, 2002).

Research Methodology: Autoethnography

Understanding Autoethnography

The methodology serves as the strategic blueprint for conducting research, encompassing the details of what data will be collected and the methods by which it will be

gathered and analysed (Pitard, 2017). For my research, I opted for autoethnography. This method is defined by scholars like Ellis (2004), Ellis et al. (2011), Jones (2005), and Adams and Herrmann (2022) as a technique that systematically analyses, describes, interprets and represents one's personal experiences, identity, and subjectivity (auto) to comprehend cultural beliefs, practices, experiences, and identities (ethno). Typically, these research projects stem from personal instances that autoethnographers are keen to delve deeper into, aiming for a richer, more profound understanding (Adams et al., 2015). Autoethnographers like me view and document society and culture personally. This involves introspection (exploring one's thoughts, emotions, and experiences) and subsequently extending the focus to their societal interactions, communities, and broader cultural contexts. As researchers, we aim to take readers or viewers on a similar journey, wavering between the personal and the outside world. As a result, certain scholars categorise autoethnography among narrative methods, whereas others position it within the ethnographic tradition (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Robben & Sluka, 2012, as cited in Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). Nonetheless, according to Cooper and Lilyea (2022), autoethnography as a unique qualitative research approach remains shaped by diverse traditions, including narrative research, autobiography, ethnography, and arts-based research.

Historical Origins of Autoethnography

The formal introduction of autoethnography dates back to the 1970s and is attributed to cultural anthropologist Hayano (1979). He championed the idea of self-observation in conventional ethnographic studies (Adams et al., 2017). Hayano employed this term to describe an ethnographer's study of their community (Pace, 2012). In the early days, anthropologists employed autoethnography to document their examination of their own cultures. Autoethnography primarily developed as a response to the detachment and emotional distance that resulted from the impersonal, emotionless, and abstract claims of truth associated with specific research methodologies, often presented in exclusive scientific language (Ellis, 2004, as cited in Ellingson & Ellis, 2008).

The methodological shift to autoethnography challenged the dominant and widely accepted research practices and ways of portraying others. Traditional research methodologies were seen as restrictive, often overlooking the nuances and diversities associated with race, gender, sexuality, age, class, education, and religion (Ellis et al., 2011; Spry, 2001). Academics began to understand that diverse individuals held varying worldviews, leading to distinct modes of expression, writing, values, and beliefs. In light of this, I delved into my unique perspectives and how they influenced my speech, writing, values, and beliefs.

Ellis et al. (2011) discovered that academics began to illustrate the interconnectedness of the facts and truths uncovered by scientists with the vocabularies and paradigms they used to represent them. These academics acknowledged the impossibility and lack of interest in overarching, universal narratives. They recognised emerging relationships between authors, audiences, and texts. Finally, these scholars realised that stories were intricate, vital, and meaningful phenomena that conveyed moral and ethical lessons. For Adams (2008), Bochner (2001, 2002), and Fisher (1984, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011), stories serve as a unique avenue for introducing ways of thinking and feeling, aiding individuals in understanding both themselves and others. They, therefore, aimed to focus on creating meaningful, relatable, and impactful research rooted in personal experiences that had been previously overlooked. They also emphasised forms of representation that enhanced the ability to resonate with and understand individuals with different backgrounds and experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011, p. 274). Autoethnographers began recognising how the lived experience influenced the research process (Ellis et al., 2011). As a result, Ellis et al. (2011, p. 274) state that autoethnography has become a research approach that embraces “subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding it from these matters or assuming they do not exist”. Autoethnography bridges a gap in traditional research where the researcher’s perspective is typically not included (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022).

In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in autoethnography across various fields of study, as demonstrated by the rising number of books explicitly dedicated to

this research approach, for example, Adams et al. (2015, 2021), Bochner and Ellis (2002, 2016), Boylorn and Orbe (2014), Chang (2008), Chang et al. (2012), Denzin (2014, 2018), Ellis (2009), Hayler (2011), Holman Jones et al. (2013), Mackinlay (2018), Muncey (2010), Pensoneau-Conway et al. (2017), Poulos (2021), Short et al. (2013), Speedy (2015), Spry (2001, 2011), Tombro (2016), and Turner et al. (2018). In addition, many autoethnographic articles have appeared in various journals (Sparkes, 2020). The increasing interest inspired Bolen to start the Doing Autoethnography conference at Wayne State University in 2011, with other conferences following, like, among others, the International Conference of Autoethnography (formerly the British Conference of Autoethnography) and Narrating Lives: International Conference on Storytelling, (Auto)Biography, and (Auto)Ethnography. All the attention inspired the University of California Press to publish a new online journal, *The Journal of Autoethnography*, in 2020 (Sparkes, 2020).

This contemporary and evolving method for designing and documenting qualitative research represents both a process and an outcome (Ellis et al., 2011), allowing the researcher to write in a highly personalised style (Wall, 2006). Autoethnography is “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political” while displaying various layers of consciousness (Ellis, 2004, p. xix). Autoethnographic performance provides insights into how we perceive and construct our understanding of reality (Spry, 2001). As the author, the researcher incorporates their perspective (the “I”) into their research and writing. Nevertheless, they approach their self-study as if examining someone else (Ellis, 2004; Goodall, 2000). Through self-narration, the autoethnographer critically investigates their and others’ social positions (Spry, 2001). We can, therefore, describe autoethnography as the study of the self but also concerning others (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Autoethnography explores culture by interweaving it with one’s personal and relational experiences. It involves studying culture by investigating the self as the researcher (Ellis, 2004; Ellis et al., 2011). Spry (2001, p. 706) states, “Interpreting culture through self-reflection and cultural refractions of identity is a defining feature of autoethnographic performance.” For Méndez (2013), autoethnography is a tool that allows

researchers to investigate and depict the culture in which they encounter a specific phenomenon.

As with other well-known qualitative research methods, the outcomes of autoethnographic research can manifest in diverse formats, such as poetry, short and extended fiction, photographic essays, personal narratives, diaries, prose, and other written forms (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, as cited in Wall, 2006). Autoethnography conveys significance through elements like dialogue, scenes, character development, and narrative arcs, adopting literary writing techniques (Bochner et al., 2000; Ellis, 2004). These pieces delve into the emotional, mental, and physical aspects of the self. They encompass tangible actions, feelings, embodiment, self-reflection, and spirituality, reflecting historical, societal, and cultural narratives. This intricate interplay is manifested through a mix of actions, emotions, thoughts, and linguistic expressions. Autoethnographic writings bare the complexities, intersections, and intricacies of an individual's engagement with others while exploring their own lived experiences (Spry, 2001). Readers who engage with these texts resonate with or recognise these complexities in their communicative journeys (Spry, 2001).

Autoethnography often conveys individual experiences and discussions related to one's self or interactions with others (Gurvitch et al., 2008). Consequently, I communicated my experience and dialogues using my curiosity cabinets in this study. Wall (2006) writes that autoethnography investigates the social world through the researcher's lived experience. As a result, autoethnography's reflective and backwards-looking essence can proficiently deepen the comprehension of the connection between an individual and the organisation (Boyle & Parry, 2007).

Incorporating Multiple Perspectives in Autoethnography

Although the researcher is often the only participant in autoethnographic studies, I also had other participants who were part of my population and sample. They included four family members and some of my junior and senior students taking a History or History Education module. These students were informed and invited to participate via the Learning

Management System (LMS). Each participant signed an online consent form to permit their data to be used anonymously for this research.

The Intricacies of Autobiographical Research

Since an autoethnographic researcher like me uses both autoethnography and ethnography to do and write (a process and a product), I paid attention to both the tenets and research practices. Consequently, autoethnography is a balancing act (Jones, 2005).

An autobiographer writes about previous experiences selectively and retrospectively (Ellis et al., 2011). However, the autoethnographic researcher does not undergo these experiences to include them in a publication. Often, their experiences are reconstructed upon reflection (Bruner, 1993; Freeman, 2004, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011).

By contrast, autobiographers frequently recount epiphanies – instances they recall and believe to have significantly influenced their lives' course or direction (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Couser, 1997; as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). They also pen down profound life crises that compel them to focus on and scrutinise their lived experiences and occurrences, following which life appears somewhat altered (Zaner, 2004, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). However, the person writing their autobiography has the option to interview other individuals and refer to sources such as photographs, diaries, and recordings in order to aid in recollecting past events and memories (Didion, 2005; Goodall, 2006; Herrmann, 2005, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011).

An autobiographer needs to possess a firm grasp of the written medium, which is both artistic and evocative and captivates the reader through the utilisation of techniques that immerse them in the narrative by delving into the character's thoughts, emotions, and actions (Ellis et al., 2011). An autobiography should offer fresh insights into personal experiences or revelations by identifying and addressing a void in the current, relevant research (Couser, 1997; Goodall, 2001, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). Additionally, employing dialogue effectively in the narrative demonstrates the autobiographer's ability to make the text captivating and emotionally nuanced (Ellis et al., 2011). Consequently, the reader must "experience an

experience” (Ellis, 1993, p. 771). Conversely, the act of narrating complements the method of illustrating.

On the other hand, through telling, the autoethnographer provides the reader with “some distance from the events described so that they might think about the events” more abstractly (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 277). This approach provides the reader with essential information to comprehend the unfolding events without the directness of dialogue and deep involvement (Ellis et al., 2011). The objective is to immerse the reader in a close and direct observational narrative (Caulley, 2008). Nevertheless, the autoethnographer continues to set the backdrop, share outcomes, and convey the actions or words of others (Ellis et al., 2011).

Also, autoethnographic researchers who conduct ethnography delve into a culture’s relational customs, prevailing values, beliefs, and collective experiences to enhance both insiders’ (cultural members) and outsiders’ (those unfamiliar with the culture) understanding of that culture (Maso, 2001, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). Essentially, the outsider, or the researcher in this context, immerses themselves in the cultural environment for an extended period, documents observations from their interactions, and discusses with the insiders their perceptions, emotions, and experiences (Adams et al., 2017). The method of ethnography has long been a crucial approach to exploring organisational culture (Boyle & Parry, 2007). Typically, ethnographers immerse themselves within a culture, becoming observational participants and chronicling cultural events and their own and others’ interactions with those events (Geertz, 1973; Goodall, 2001, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). Ellis et al. (2011) highlight that an ethnographer might also engage in conversations with cultural members, scrutinise their communication patterns, explore spatial and locational usages, or analyse tangible items like clothing, architecture, and various media such as books, films, and photographs. When penning ethnographies, the aim is to provide a thorough representation of the culture, enriching comprehension for those familiar and unfamiliar with it (Geertz, 1973, p.10; Goodall, 2001, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). Jorgenson (2002, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011) affirms that this description emerges from an inductive approach, that is, identifying recurring cultural

experiences, whether emotions, narratives, or events, as reflected in field notes, interviews, or artefacts.

For the autoethnographer to move between various accounts centred around distance, there is a choice between the first- or third-person narrative; the first-person narrative is recommended if you want less distance, and the third-person is influential if you want more separation (Hardy, 2006). Cheney (2001) compares narrative perspectives to camera angles: the first-person viewpoint resembles a close-up camera shot, while the third person equates to a broad, distant view. The close-up provides a more personal, direct, and engaging perspective, whereas the third-person perspective offers a broader scope, accommodating more characters, detailed descriptions, and environments. In this thesis, readers will notice that I employ first- and third-person narrative styles. This approach makes the content artistic and emotionally resonant by switching between different vantage points.

Ultimately, autoethnographic researchers aim to craft expressive and compelling representations of lived experience and interpersonal experiences when creating autoethnographies (Ellis et al., 2011). This is achieved by identifying recurrent cultural experiences from field notes, interviews, or tangible objects and then articulating them through narratives, illustrative techniques, descriptive methods, and varying narrative voices (Ellis et al., 2011). The objective of the autoethnographer is to render personal experiences insightful and cultural narratives captivating. They also strive to create accessible content to engage a broader and more varied readership, which conventional research often overlooks. This approach facilitates the potential for personal and societal transformation for more individuals (Bochner, 1997; Ellis, 1995; Goodall, 2006; as cited in Ellis et al., 2011).

To articulate my viewpoint on the social context of the study, whether it pertained to the community, the organisation, or the group of participants involved, I used positionality (Rowe, 2014). As supported by Plummer (2003, p. 522), my positionality in this autoethnography placed the author and researcher, me, within the study. It was a platform for investigating the social world, which was “grounded in everyday life”. Pitard (2017) highlights race, age, gender, and education as indicators of a researcher’s position in autoethnography.

Beyond that, a researcher's stance is influenced by the philosophical beliefs and notions accumulated over their life, often rooted deep within their subconscious.

Furthermore, according to Sharp (2019), a researcher's background is pivotal in a bricolage approach, extending beyond initial insights and influencing the dynamic between the researcher and the subject matter. Carr (1961) underscores the significance of the reader understanding a researcher's background. He notes that when addressing the question "What is history?" our response, whether we are aware of it or not, mirrors our temporal positioning and contributes to our broader perspective of the society we inhabit.

Using positionality, the autoethnography researcher seeks to immerse the reader in the studied social environment, deepening their grasp of the examined culture and the individual's relationship to it (Pitard, 2017). According to Pitard (2017), the influence of autoethnography is moulded by various factors, including the research context, the researcher's fundamental beliefs, and the underlying assumptions that guide their actions. Consequently, readers, whether they belong to the culture or are external to it, gain insights into the distinct traits of that culture (Pitard, 2017). We then see a "collaborative journey between the author and the reader in understanding and knowing the culture studied" by revealing their positioning (Pitard, 2017, p. 18).

Since I am a student, lecturer, and educator (I do not see myself as a historian and author yet), I focused on my past and present lived experiences for this study; however, I needed to centre myself and determine my positionality. As Ellis (2004) and Jones (2005) describe, I was only able to obtain a sense of order, a notion of my actions and the consequences, but my position as the researcher remained unclear. The position I embraced impacted every stage of my research journey, including the initial formulation of the question or problem, the research design, and the process of inviting others to participate. My stance also shaped the construction and application of knowledge and how the results were shared and published (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Initially, I had planned to use a combination of analytical and evocative (or emotive) autoethnography, but I reconsidered later since using analytical autoethnography would

answer the research questions more effectively. Ellingson and Ellis (2008) describe the difference between these two types of autoethnography. Analytic autoethnographers concentrate on creating theoretical explanations for broader social phenomena, while evocative autoethnographers emphasise narrative presentations that initiate discussions and elicit emotional responses. An analytic autoethnographer aims to write and analyse a particular group objectively (Méndez, 2013). The autoethnographic researcher possesses both an external and internal perspective. However, they cannot solely focus externally, as introspection guided by reflexivity is a hallmark of autoethnography (Bunde-Birouste et al., 2018). For Anderson (2006), analytic autoethnography involves research where the researcher fulfils the following criteria. First, the researcher should be part of the research group or community under investigation. Secondly, the researcher should be identifiable as a member through their presence in published texts. Thirdly, the researcher should use analytic reflexivity. Fourthly, the researcher should interact and converse with participants beyond themselves. Finally, the researcher should enhance the theoretical comprehension of broader societal occurrences.

Consequently, for Anderson (2006), there are various methodological advantages to using analytical autoethnography. For instance, autoethnographers possess various motivations for engaging in the social environment they are examining, leading them to invest time in the field. Also, the researcher provides access, which results in insider meanings, although we account not only for the researcher's values and beliefs but also those of other insiders. Autoethnographers should actively seek the perspectives, emotions, and attitudes of other insiders in addition to their own. Being immersed in the social environment they are studying provides researchers with a unique perspective, allowing them access to specific data. Thus, analytic autoethnography integrates the researcher's active participation within a group into the analysis. This enriches the theoretical insights into the examined social processes by interpreting the data more deeply (Bunde-Birouste et al., 2018).

Assessing autoethnography, which encompasses examining the researcher's personal experiences, is arguably more intricate than reviewing conventional research

endeavours (Adams et al., 2017). Spry (2001) identifies two factors that constitute an excellent autoethnography, but, in theory, they also become warnings or critiques. First, the writing must be well crafted and respected by literature critics. While average writing would transport readers to a specific setting, both in location and time, prompting them to contemplate their identity formation, a compelling autoethnography should captivate emotions while offering a critical introspection of one's social interactions.

A significant concern is that critics often measure autoethnography using the benchmarks set for conventional ethnographies or the standards of autobiographical writings (Ellis et al., 2011). Despite being a blend of ethnographer and autobiographer, autoethnographers face criticism for aiming to match the benchmarks of traditional ethnographic or autobiographical works. As a result, autoethnography gets criticised for being overly artistic or not artistic enough, either too scientific or lacking scientific rigour. When viewed through the lens of ethnography, critics argue that autoethnography does not uphold scientific standards, deeming it not rigorous, theoretical, or analytical enough. Some ethnographers believe autoethnography leans too heavily on aesthetics, emotions, and therapeutic elements (Ellis, 2009; Keller, 1995, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). Critics also argue that autoethnographers do not invest enough time in fieldwork or engage sufficiently with the culture they find themselves in (Buzard, 2003; Fine, 2003; Delamont, 2009, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). On the other hand, when assessed as an autobiography, autoethnography is frequently criticised for its perceived deficiency in aesthetic and literary qualities. Ellis et al. (2011) observe that autoethnographers often emphasise the scientific and sociological dimensions, striving for scientific validity, sometimes neglecting the artistic elements and downplaying the necessity of being skilled artists.

For Ellis et al. (2011), criticisms that pit the autobiographical against the ethnographical mistakenly place art and science in opposing camps. Autoethnography seeks to bridge this divide. In doing so, autoethnographers challenge the traditional dichotomy of art and science. They argue that research can simultaneously be analytical, theoretical, emotionally charged, therapeutic, and encompass personal and societal aspects. However,

they also emphasise the importance of presenting research that is resonant and artistically compelling without necessarily delving into fiction or strictly adhering to literary conventions. In essence, they advocate a unique perspective on the social sciences. As Rorty (1982, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011) suggests, these are not discrepancies that need resolution but differing viewpoints highlighting the vastness of human experience. For autoethnographers, writing and researching are acts of social justice, not just pursuits of accuracy. Their primary objective is to produce analytical yet relatable content that can transform their audience and society (Holman Jones, 2005, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011).

As an educator, my autoethnographic narratives serve as powerful teaching instruments, presenting captivating tales that resonate with students on a personal level, all while illuminating broader historical contexts (Drydon-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006a). In the evolving landscape of South Africa, educators play a pivotal role as architects of memory and testimonies with their pedagogical essence, which emerge as invaluable teaching aids. These narratives offer students an alternative perspective, countering official histories and singular memory narratives. We have endeavoured to delve into the role of history educators as facilitators of memory construction in South African educational institutions, to investigate the potential of educator testimonies as instructional tools, and to pave the way for academic discussions on the subject. Personal narratives, encompassing biographies, autobiographies, oral histories, and testimonies, possess a unique ability to connect with audiences on a profound, human level – an attribute often missing in other historical methodologies or educational approaches (Drydon-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006, 2006a).

Hence, personal narratives are central to my collection of intriguing tales. The strength of such testimonies lies not just in the intricacies of individual experiences but in how my narratives provide insights into the backdrop of South Africa during the times that people inhabited and toiled in it (Drydon-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006a). Specifically, history classrooms emerge as pivotal arenas for fostering discussions and crafting inclusive memories.

Research Methods

Introducing Cabinets of Curiosities

I first read about using cabinets of curiosities in autoethnography in an article by Evans and Blair (2016), "Listening to self: An appeal for autoethnography in art museum education". As museum educators, Evans and Blair (2016) were encouraged and expected to understand and listen to their audiences. In addition, they needed to understand themselves as educators, students, colleagues, and museum employees in leadership roles and as humans. To do this, their listening skills had to be turned both inward and outward for them to become better educators and students (Evans & Blair, 2016). In an autoethnographic study, Evans and Blair (2016) encouraged museum educators to create a cabinet of curiosities, that is, cabinets filled with artefacts that were self- and culture-inspired. They also inspired me to use cabinets of curiosities in my autoethnography.

During the 17th century, a cabinet of curiosities denoted an individual's assortment of marvellous objects showcased in a room or bespoke wooden cabinets that enjoyed popularity at the time (Evans & Blair, 2016). Alternatively, a cabinet of curiosities could denote a compilation of extraordinary items (Mauriès, 2019). This might have included treasures and marvels acquired from newly explored territories, not by a single conqueror, empire, collector, explorer, or museum, but by various individuals and entities (Turner & Pimental, 2021). Recently, cabinets of curiosities have become a metaphor since they can challenge current knowledge categories (Van Reenen, 2018).

Autoethnography is a theoretical and methodological perspective for elucidating how individuals can enhance their readiness for self-exploration (Evans & Blair, 2016). Also, autoethnography can enhance understanding of the self and better serve audiences through increased researcher awareness (Evans & Blair, 2016). In this way, autoethnography and narratives can make research more personal. Similarly, I used cabinets of curiosities filled with objects of my self, culture, and society as an autoethnographic activity to help with my self-exploration of my lived experience of history education, thus making my research more

personal. For this reason, I am exploring my world of history education (past and present) to plunder and pilfer (with permission) my treasures, wonders, and curiosities, as displayed in my curiosity cabinets.

Collecting the mysterious and extraordinary has been part of human evolution for a long time (Koeppel, 2002). Mauriès (2019, p. 35) describes the history of cabinets of curiosities as “progressive fragmentation” where the space is shattered into kaleidoscopic pieces. Each element in this space, from the central table to the cabinet doors, windows, and ceiling design, leads to interpretation and aesthetics (Mauriès, 2019). Each aspect of the cabinets of curiosities is infused with meaning and must be codified. It needs analogy and symmetry to serve and reinforce the illusion.

In the 15th century, Europeans, aided by strides in cartography, astronomy, and shipbuilding, explored and mapped distant American, African, and Asian shores (Amsel-Arieli, 2012). The Age of Exploration was a time of swiftly broadening frontiers of understanding and the relentless pursuit of what seemed impossible (Koeppel, 2002). The explorers discovered many plants, animals, art forms, traditions, and practices during their journeys. Alongside thrilling tales of their expeditions, they shared believable and unbelievable finds (Amsel-Arieli, 2012). According to Amsel-Arieli (2012), inquisitive Europeans, ranging from doctors to nobles and monarchs, curated collections of these unique and extraordinary items, sacred relics, and artistic pieces, showcasing their knowledge, authority, and status. These collections became known as cabinets of curiosities.

Cabinets of curiosities were initially, during the Renaissance era, an encyclopaedic collection of various objects found in nature and the world (both old and new) (Collections & cabinets of curiosities, 2013). The intention was to summarise the world to the end of the Earth (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, n.d.). However, during the late Renaissance in Europe, there was a surge in the creation of privately owned collections containing various artistic, natural, and ethnographic objects. Collecting was considered valuable intellectually and socially, leading to knowledge repositories that answered questions and aroused scientific curiosity (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World,

n.d.). The cabinets of curiosities were indeed a distinctive product of that time, manifesting the desire for humanist learning (Koepe, 2002). In his 1580 essay “On experience”, De Montaigne (1533–1592) reflected (as cited in Koepe, 2002):

In my opinion, the most ordinary things, the most common and familiar, if we could see them in their true light, would turn out to be the grandest miracles of nature and the most marvellous examples, especially as regards the subject of the action of men.

The cabinets of curiosities encompassed assortments of artefacts drawn from diverse fields, including natural history, archaeology, art, and geology (Van Wynsberghe, 2019). There were various categories of curiosities, such as *naturalia*, *mirabilia*, *artefacta*, *scientifica*, antiquities, exotica, ethnographical objects, and many more (Mauriès, 2019). MacLure (2006) and Van Reenen (2018) added more diverse objects to this list: cupboards crammed with natural history specimens, maps, seeds, skeletons, tapestries, coins, scripture, optical instruments, sculptures, minerals, mechanical toys, and gems. Essentially, the objects of the early modern collections and the categories were arranged between two poles: nature and art. These two poles were described as two realms: *naturalia* and *artificilia* (Mauriès, 2019, p. 69; Van Reenen, 2018). Instead of separating the natural and human-made artefacts, the collectors brought all the objects together into a single collection. Furthermore, the unique layout of these cabinets highlighted the contrasts between nature and artistry, the old and the new, the divine and the mortal, and between European and non-European elements (Van Reenen, 2018).

Initially, artificial artefacts and objects of nature became part of the personal collections of wealthy individuals. These cabinets, in various forms, first appeared in the homes of royalty and aristocrats in the 16th century in Europe (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, n.d.), taking the shape of cupboards, closets, and cabinets (Van Reenen, 2018; Van Wynsberghe, 2019). Throughout the years, cabinets of curiosities also had many other names; for example, some collections were called a *vernunft-kammer*, a room of reason

(Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, n.d.) or cabinets of wonder (Collections & cabinets of curiosities, 2013). In Spain, cabinets of curiosities were called *gabinets* (Thurner & Pimental, 2021). In Germany in the 1550s, the cabinets were called *kunstkammer* or *wunderkammer(n)* (Mauriès, 2019). During Italy's 15th and 16th centuries, these cabinets were called *studiolo*. In a piece by the renowned Flemish painter Frans Francken the Younger (refer to Figure 2.2), who hails from a prominent artistic family, there is a depiction of a *studiolo*. This *studiolo* signified the evolution from the earlier cabinets of curiosities during the Renaissance era. For the educated elite of that time, it was vital to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the world through diverse pursuits. The boundaries separating various fields of knowledge were not as defined as they are now, and the line between art and natural items was often blurred (Aloi, n.d.). For Aloi (n.d.), just like the cabinets they succeeded, the collections in *studiolos* carried symbolic significance, prompting viewers to ponder the fleeting nature of human existence.

Figure 2.2

“Le cabinet de curiosites” by Frans Francken the Younger



Note. Frans Francken the Younger (1581–1642). “Le cabinet de curiosites” (The collector’s cabinet). Oil on wood, ca 1620–1625/1636. Art History Museum, Vienne (Aloi, n.d.).

Originally, cabinets of curiosity were not designed with a scientific mindset. Instead, they were spaces where those with the means could craft their interpretations of the world. These cabinets were not organised systematically or chronologically. Born from a spontaneous mix of interests, they showcased various oddities without any specific order. It was up to the observer to discern any relationship between diverse objects (Wagner, 2019).

Nonetheless, even during the early modern era, these cabinets served as spaces where collectors experimented with various methods of comprehending and organising the world (Mak & Pollack, 2013). Mak and Pollack (2013) note that the diverse objects within these cabinets were arranged and categorised in numerous ways, with descriptions often highlighting the objects’ intriguing, beautiful, and rare qualities. The organisation of knowledge was thus not yet entwined in formalised classification systems; collectors deployed personal performance of understanding for the sensory–emotional rationale. Therefore, the curiosity cabinets were a testament to how collectors grappled with the world’s diversity, linking their aesthetic sensibilities with knowledge production.

Later, collections filled entire rooms (and sometimes more) as the gathering of objects grew and spilt off the furniture cabinets’ shelves (Aloi, n.d.). Guides and manuals instructing collectors on appropriate techniques to preserve and display began to be published in the late 16th century (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, n.d.). Visitors from all over Europe, occasionally including royalty, visited the impressive collections (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, n.d.). Subsequently, the development of taxonomy and the growing specialisation of knowledge into distinct disciplines impacted collectors, prompting them to embrace a more systematic approach that accurately categorised objects and established connections between conventional and unconventional exhibits (Wagner, 2019). During the 18th century, the focus shifted even more. The growth of

science as a distinct discipline led to collections moving away from representing a collector's wealth and intelligence to making sense of the world more objectively (Aloi, n.d.).

Collecting valuable items has always been a practice among the affluent. However, the early cabinets of curiosities often served as indicators of one's social standing and wealth (Aloi, n.d.). Displaying such a cabinet was a prominent way to showcase affluence and societal prestige (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology & the Ancient World, n.d.). Nevertheless, the objects were selected because they were contingent on their origins, time, exceptional artistry, and space and were justified by their rarity and quality, disregarding the category of the objects (Mauriès, 2019). However, the distinct character of each collection primarily hinged on its founder and creator, namely, the collector. Therefore, the common denominator of all cabinets is twofold (Mauriès, 2019, p. 51). The first denominator is the system or organisation and eclecticism of the objects. The second denominator is the unique personality with which the objects are filled. As collectors stood before their cabinets, pointing to the various items, they experienced a feeling of comfort and mastery over a world that frequently seemed vast, bewildering, and unfriendly (Aloi, n.d.). The collector completely controlled the interpretation, and the content genuinely mirrored their personal preferences and sense of self. Indeed, all cabinets are subjective and evolve, mirroring the moments in the lives and passions of the collectors and the more extensive networks in which they are involved (Turner & Pimental, 2021).

Showing guests the cabinets of curiosities was a way to entertain and impress them with a collection of rare antiquities and exotic natural specimens (Chaliakopoulos, 2021). When visitors enter the room, the first impression is that of a miniature world or cosmos due to the accumulation of objects (Mauriès, 2019). At first, the visitor might be confused, and it could be challenging to find their way around. The objects in the cabinets were not always transparent to the audience. Often, collectors concealed the contents in drawers, shelves, niches, and boxes (MacLure, 2006). Occasionally, the maker even incorporated mechanisms that altered the appearance of the objects or manipulated reality through lenses and mirrors. Then, the visitor had to open the cupboards and drawers of the cabinets to examine each

object in detail (Mauriès, 2019). While the audience wandered through and past the cabinets, a definite purpose was to be achieved. The aim was to impress the audience with lavishness and abundance (Mauriès, 2019). Finally, the audience faced the collector's conception of the world (Berkday, 2022).

Exhibits elicited two primary reactions: awe and connection (Lubar, 2018). The objects on display captivated the viewers, making them pause in sheer amazement. According to Greenblatt (1990), amazement was the objects' ability to make viewers halt, sense a profound uniqueness, and command heightened focus. On the other hand, connection pertained to the capability of the displayed items to extend their influence beyond their immediate environment. They aimed to prompt viewers to recognise the intricate cultural dynamics that birthed them (Greenblatt, 1990). The prevailing perspective of that era delighted in finding connections. It perceived associations between objects, entities, spirits, and nature. Every item in the cabinet was aesthetically pleasing and served as a window to the mysteries of the universe.

The cabinet of curiosities was closely associated with the emergence of cultural research and the early development of ethnographic collections, which frequently included mementoes gathered by sailors during expeditions that, in one manner or another, found their way back to European capitals (Buchli, 2002, as cited in Van Wynsberghe, 2019). Eventually, the ethnographic monograph replaced these collections. If the early collections aimed to introduce Europeans to exotic, hidden, and otherwise mysterious worlds, then the pursuit of understanding these other realms of human experience found more effective representation through ethnographic monographs. These monographs were founded on fieldwork and active participant observation (Buchli, 2002, as cited in Van Wynsberghe, 2019).

As De Montaigne (1533–1592) stated, a room should be set aside for oneself (Mauriès, 2019). It should be kept accessible to become a place to establish one's true liberty and find one's principal solitude and asylum. Therefore, our normal conversation should be with and of ourselves in this space, to talk and laugh as though there is no outside world.

Modern Cabinets of Curiosities

Wonder is the keynote of cabinets of curiosities and a fundamental component (Mauriès, 2019, p. 67). Since wonder is a state of mind excited by the perception of novelty or something strange or poorly understood, I still frequently find myself in such a state of wonder. Luckily, cabinets of curiosities in various formats are back in fashion after experiencing a renewal in the late 20th century (Lubar, 2018). For roughly two centuries, museums have been the dominant platform for exhibiting art and artefacts, effectively serving the purposes of preservation, research, and education. However, as the 20th century ended, there was mounting resistance to museums' inflexible organisational and presentation methods. The museum model had become obsolete. For many, the collections were reminders of colonialism, and the institution's interaction with the public had become undemocratic. The methods employed seemed narrow-minded and aimed at enforcing ideas that reinforced social, racial, and cultural control. As a response, those museums which had adhered to premodern ideals transformed into postmodern museums (Lubar, 2018).

There have been many recent responses to the museums' crises: new educational representations, collection methods, and types of exhibitions. One of the responses was an old exhibit: the cabinets of curiosities. As a result, cabinets of curiosities have experienced a resurgence in recent years, adapting to contemporary materials and visual culture. It is worth noting that a sense of wonder is often intertwined with uncertainty or doubt (Evans & Blair, 2016). To create wonder, cabinets of curiosities call on the audience to reconsider their programmed positions and explore new ways of thinking (Raes, 2018, as cited in Van Wynsberghe, 2019).

Since creating cabinets of curiosities is a gateway to autoethnography practices, you need to connect to and reflect on the objects within the cabinets (Evans & Blair, 2016). You must embody the elements of the personal self and the past. For this, you can ask several questions (Evans & Blair, 2016): Which items serve as narrative elements in my life? What significance or recollections do I attribute to these objects? Among all the items I possess,

which do I feel is the most vital connection, and what is the reason behind this connection? Which objects continue to evoke a sense of fascination or amazement when I encounter them? How do the artefacts of my life contribute to shaping my identity or the culture I identify with? These are the same questions I had to ask myself when constructing my three curiosity cabinets. Like the collectors of old, I strived to find a connection to the items in the cabinets (Evans & Blair, 2016). The objects were significant to me and held personal meaning. So, why does the collector hold on to the objects? Why do I hold on to the objects? This unique admission requires an explanation and consequently becomes a conversation starter.

I cannot disregard the role of the family in cultivating a culture of collecting. This culture, which revolves around the collection of photographs and mementoes, can be a familial characteristic (Bliss, 2014, as cited in Marchall, 2019), or it may exist within a tightly-knit community and subsequently be passed on to others and the succeeding generation (Marchall, 2019). Likewise, the cultivation of an emotional bond with specific personal items, the unique ways in which individuals interact with these items, and, notably, their use to recollect and share memories can arguably be fostered within a family and passed on to younger generations (Marchall, 2019). Nevertheless, according to Marchall (2019), the meanings that individuals attach to significant objects in their lives and their manner of interacting with them are fundamentally a question of personal choice.

The significance of family in shaping a culture of collecting is undeniable. Families often have a tradition of preserving memories through photographs and keepsakes, which can span generations (Bliss, 2014, as cited in Marchall, 2019). Such a culture can also be observed within tight-knit communities, ensuring its transmission to succeeding generations (Marchall, 2019). Similarly, families play a pivotal role in cultivating deep emotional connections with certain cherished items and the rituals surrounding their use for reminiscing and memory-sharing. These traditions can be imparted to younger family members (Marchall, 2019).

Lived Experience: History Education as My Companion

In autoethnography, the researcher maintains an awareness of themselves and others, as well as of events, objects, time, and actions, to construct meaning from their lived experience (Simon, 2013, as cited in Timm, 2016). Lived experience refers to the researcher's encounters, choices, and decisions and how these elements influence their perspective on knowledge (Boylorn, 2008). Cahour et al. (2016) define lived experience as the ongoing series of actions, thoughts, emotions, and sensory perceptions that unfold during a particular activity, whether in a moment of awareness or upon subsequent reflection, such as during an interview. Describing genuine specific details from real life evokes emotions and mental imagery in the reader (Caulley, 2008). The most effective nonfiction writers do not instruct us how to think, feel, or have emotions. Instead, they provide concrete, tangible details (Cheney, 2001). Often, lived experience focuses on ordinary, everyday occurrences or events that are life-changing and life-affirming as a result of what people do and how they do it and because of their language, rituals, and routines (Boylorn, 2008). I appreciate the challenging nature of lived experience, as it allowed me to use a single life, my own, to gain insights into the society in which I find myself and discover how individual experiences can influence aspects such as development, thoughts, and perspectives, among others. Vital to my lived experience was how I lived through and responded to those experiences, ultimately shaping my knowledge, identity, and characteristics (Boylorn, 2008).

There are various reasons a researcher employs lived experience in qualitative research (Boylorn, 2008). As Boylorn (2008) proposed, my lived experience served as a compass that guided me towards self-awareness and enabled me to discern the interconnectedness of my life and how different life events could reflect and respond to broader societal and public themes. This opened up avenues for storytelling, interpretation, and the construction of meaning. The objective of exploring my lived experience was not to critique my life but rather to comprehend it.

Storytelling is an inherent and instinctive human response to grasp or derive significance from life occurrences (Bruner, 1990). According to Bruner (2004), we construct and share our stories by selecting them from various possible life scenarios and universes, essentially becoming variations of the established cultural norms. Consequently, we articulate our personal stories and the stories of others within the narrative frameworks that our culture offers us, drawing upon a cultural narrative tool kit. Bruner (2002, p. 89) further contends that storytelling is a popular method for expressing human ambitions and the ups and downs they entail, whether our own or those of others. In this way, stories serve as a means of organising and contemplating encounters (Bruner, 1988). We share our narratives with others to encourage them to ponder our interpretations, construct their own, and better understand those experiences (Short, 2012). Storytelling is how we make sense of the world (Short, 2012).

Lived experience speaks to many levels of the self. First, it highlights the researcher's individual and distinctive viewpoint, emphasising how subjective factors influence their perception. Secondly, lived experience acknowledges all dimensions of the researcher's life and identity, even if they are not directly related to the research topic or pertinent to the research questions (Boylorn, 2008). For this reason, Chang (2008) suggests that researchers should collect self-observational and self-reflective data to increase their understanding of the self and the world around them. Consequently, I used multiple approaches to gather and construct the data, which was exhibited and stored in my curiosity cabinets. I combined text, images, and sensory data as it is not easy to capture data in only one form (Gair & Van Luyn, 2017). I investigated my lived experience and reactions by methodically gathering and analysing narrative materials through diverse approaches that ensured the data's reliability and outcomes (Byrne, 2001).

Ultimately, by exploring my lived experience, I aimed to comprehend the disparities between my life experiences as a child, a student, and an educator and to examine why certain experiences preceded others (Boylorn, 2008). I framed my lived experience against local and national culture and events.

Looking into My Cabinets of Curiosities

Introduction to My Cabinets of Curiosities

Given that autoethnography merges the attributes of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011), I fused my world with the external world surrounding me. In part, I grew up with a cabinet of curiosities in our living room. It was filled with heirlooms and other unique ornaments (see Figure 2.3). The walls of the living room were covered with old family photographs and objects, including a sickle, a tinder box, significant cups and saucers, doilies, and glass bottles.

Figure 2.3

Jaco, Heine, my father, and me in our living room in Kraaifontein



Note. My mother took this photograph of Jaco and Heine (my two younger brothers), my father, and me in our living room in Kraaifontein. In the background, you can see the curiosity cabinet I grew up with. It contained heirlooms and other unique ornaments (photograph by Marie van As).

However, the notion of a cabinet of curiosities is much more than the physical memory of objects. For example, Giliomee et al. (2022) wrote in *New History of South Africa* about the head luggage that the first European immigrants brought along when they came to the Cape Colony in the late 1600s (and after that). Their head luggage was intellectual and far more

critical than their clothes and belongings. I like this metaphor, not because of the colonial connotation associated with these immigrants but due to the reminder that we all have head luggage. However, we do not carry a mere suitcase or a carry-on. Instead, we all have metaphorical cabinets of curiosities. I adapted the notion of cabinets of curiosities to store and exhibit my past and relevant lived experiences in history education.

Scientists frequently use analogies, metaphors, and similes when writing an explanatory account of some phenomenon (Roediger III, 1980). Likewise, philosophers and psychologists have employed many analogies in attempting to understand the workings of memory. Quite interestingly, they have compared memories of a house, a suitcase, and a briefcase in the past, among others. Two famous early psychologists, William James and Sigmund Freud, proposed this comparison. Coupled with this deliberate spatial storage metaphor is the idea that a search process utilises information stored in one's memory. James (1890, p. 654, as cited in Roediger III, 1980) believed that people search for a forgotten idea in their memory just as they rummage through a house for a lost object.

Similarly, Freud employed the analogy of a house to clarify his ideas concerning the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious facets of the mind. This analogy helped him to convey the importance of repression and censorship within his theoretical framework (Roediger III, 1980). For Freud, a house has two rooms. The first represents the unconscious, and the second the conscious; there is a gatekeeper between the two rooms. The concept of a suitcase, symbolising movement associated with migration, serves as a visual method. It represents an artistic process of assembly in which everything is condensed, secured, and tightly packed, much like the act of filling a suitcase to its limits (Cherry, 2017). This image is similar to my Sub A school suitcase (see Figure 2.4), which served as a temporary container for a collection of items that were continuously packed and unpacked, taken out and reassembled, repurposed, reused, exchanged, or discarded (Cherry, 2017). Similarly, cabinets of curiosities, or wonder rooms, exemplify a static yet adaptable exhibition of their contents, which are also packed and unpacked, taken out and reassembled, repurposed, reused, exchanged, or discarded.

Figure 2.4

Me and my suitcase on my first day of Sub A in 1986 (photograph by Piet or Marie van As)



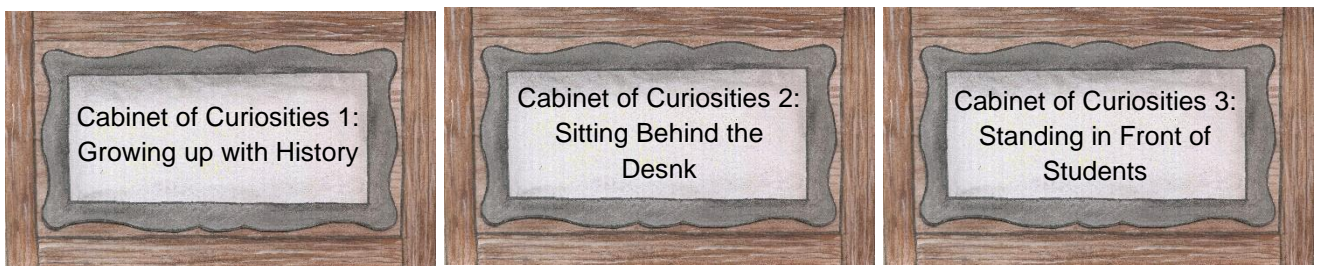
The text-based or non-textual items featured in my cabinets of curiosities were, and remain, tangible representations of my culture and shed light on their historical backgrounds (Chang, 2008). Within the cabinets was an assortment of personal and cultural artefacts, items crafted by individuals in the society, whether overtly or indirectly, reflecting societal norms and values (Chang, 2008). As the physical foundation of a society, artefacts are ubiquitous at all levels and periods of culture. However, artefacts are often misconstrued as antiquated items only displayed in museums and representing only traditional societies. According to cognitive anthropologists, cultural artefacts are not culture per se. They only manifest culture, although others consider “material culture [to be] a vital aspect of culture” (Erickson, 2004, p. 80).

To identify artefacts that were important to my life for this study, I had to examine what constituted my primary culture. Muncey (2005, p. 2) argues that collecting artefacts is a valuable data collection technique in autoethnographic study since “additional evidence is supplied by meaningful artefacts acquired throughout my life ... to fill some of the gaps left by the snapshots”. Muncey (2005) proposes employing snapshots, artefacts, documents, metaphors, and psychological and physical journeys to contemplate and communicate a

bricolage of sentiments, encounters, emotions, and actions that depict a comprehensive perspective of life. Consequently, I used three cabinets of curiosities to exhibit my various data collection and construction techniques: Cabinet of Curiosities 1, Cabinet of Curiosities 2, and Cabinet of Curiosities 3 (see the summary in Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Summary of research methods collected and constructed in my three cabinets of curiosities



Memories	Memories	Memories
Photographs	Documents (school writing	Semi-structured interviews
Site visits	books, tests, school reports,	(participating students)
Semi-structured interviews	textbooks)	Open-ended questionnaire
(four family members)	Self-interview	Self-interview
Documents (fiction books,	Field notes	Self-observation and -reflection
letters and newspaper		(field notes)
articles)		
Self-interview		
Field notes		

While I would have liked to have stored and especially exhibited my data construction, the collection is seemingly in disarray (like in my actual cabinet, as shown in Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5

My recently bought cabinet (photograph by Adrienne van As)



Figure 2.6

Some of the objects in my actual cabinet of curiosities



Personal Memory

In autoethnography, one's recollections are central. The past acts as a framework to understand one's current identity, and through memory, we access the rich tapestry of our past (Chang, 2008). For this reason, remembering is crucial, as in other ethnographic approaches. Both autoethnographers and ethnographers frequently depend on memory as a source of information. (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) acknowledges the importance of personal memory in research from multiple viewpoints, suggesting that diverse recollections can be used as the primary data source. He also notes that autoethnographers have various methods to assist in recalling events, organising their memories, and crafting field narratives as data. For this reason, I conducted interviews (self and others), collected photographs and documents, and even visited some sites with historical significance that we had visited as children.

While autoethnographers value their memories highly, ethnographers rely on the recollections of informants and their recent observations and interactions in the field (Chang, 2007). As Chang (2007) highlights, a significant difference between autoethnographers and ethnographers is that autoethnographers candidly recognise their memory as a chief data source in their studies. By contrast, most ethnographers refrain from blending their memories with the data they collect during fieldwork. Being an autoethnographer granted me unique insight into my previous encounters, my perceptions of them, and an intimate knowledge of what held significance for my research.

However, memory can be both an ally and an adversary for autoethnographers (Chang, 2007). On the one hand, memory enables autoethnographers to access a wealth of data that no one else can tap into, but on the other, it is inherently selective and tends to shape, constrain, distort, and diminish over time, often obscuring the vitality of specific details (Chang, 2007). Additionally, we tend to omit or embellish details when recalling them. Therefore, like subjectivity, memories can challenge our autobiographical research endeavours unless we acknowledge and discipline them appropriately.

Materiality, the study of objects and their relationships to and in social life, actively triggers and shapes recollection and links people and ideas across time, space, and generations (Rigney, 2017). Similarly, materiality triggered and shaped my recollection, linking me across time, space, and generations. Memories are often conceptualised as objects stored in the mental realm, and the process of recalling them is likened to searching for these memory objects (Roediger III, 1980). As a specific form of materiality, these memory objects captivate us with their physical attributes, including shape, texture, colour, and size. They offer us narratives by enduring beyond the time of their creation (Rigney, 2017, p. 474, as cited in Loots, 2022). Typically, memory objects belong to someone and serve as a means of remembering and commemorating a particular event or relationship. Loots (2022) has identified numerous categories and examples of memory objects, encompassing heirlooms like furniture, quilts, and rings; travel mementoes such as mugs, earrings, and fridge magnets; discovered items like coins and glass bottles; self-expressive items such as paintings, flutes, and diaries; places like gardens and cities; and experiences such as holidays or family rituals. These objects may not necessarily have practical utility but are often highly cherished for their sentimental value (Gordon, 1986; Hatzimoyis, 2003, as cited in Loots, 2022).

Memory objects act as reminders, helping to trigger and ease the act of recollection. These profoundly personal items can be powerful, prompting emotional reactions and influencing societal behaviours and outcomes (Harrington-Watt, 2014; Wall, 2010, as cited in Marchall, 2019). They can spark emotions, ignite spiritual connections, encourage physical reactions or ritualistic behaviours, inspire thoughts, and nourish creativity. Moreover, they offer therapeutic benefits, fostering comfort, reinforcing one's sense of self, and enhancing a feeling of belonging (Haldrup, 2017; Harrington-Watt, 2014; Svasek, 2012; Turkle, 2011; Turan, 2010; Wall, 2010, as cited in Marchall, 2019). These evocative items can become emotional companions and serve as focal points for reflective reminiscence, instilling a profound affection (Sarup, 1994, as cited in Marchall, 2019; Turkle, 2011). Such objects and the memories they trigger and shape are stored and exhibited in my cabinets of curiosities. Although I have collected several memory objects through the years (among these are coins, shells, pencils,

fridge magnets, experiences, postcards, glass bottles, ceramic pieces, and rocks – this list is rather long), I have focused on the memory objects that somehow influenced or shaped my orientation towards (or in) history and history education. Alternatively, and even more so, I centre my attention on the memory objects that shed light on the transactional and historical gaps I encountered in my history education over the years. This is because these memory objects have played a role in shaping and enhancing my social identity over time (Loots, 2022).

Photographs

I found various photographs related to my family members, which I had stored in photograph albums, tins, boxes, or online from the time before I was born until the recent present (see Figure 2.7). Photographs as memory objects are part of my collection in my cabinets of curiosities.

Figure 2.7

My father, Chico, and I on the beach



Note. In this photograph, my father, Chico (our first dog), and I are posing on the beach with Table Mountain in the background (photograph by Marie van As)

Visual methodology, encompassing the use of photographs, comprises a range of techniques employed to comprehend and interpret images. While anthropology and sociology

have employed these techniques for an extended period, they remain a comparatively recent research methodology in most other fields (Glaw et al., 2017). In modern fieldwork, photographs serve as data sources, particularly in ethnographic studies, and can be taken directly by the participants (Glaw et al., 2017; Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, social researchers' research methods should be applied creatively to make them fit for purpose (Kara, 2015, as cited in Hanna, 2020). Photographs can show detail and depth that words cannot convey (Guest et al., 2013, as cited in Glaw et al., 2017). For this reason, I have chosen them as part of my data collection, and thus, they are a vital part of my cabinets of curiosities.

Chang (2008) sees the benefits of using visual data. First, visual images of yourself and your life's context can be readily produced and stored. Furthermore, visual data complements textual data and, on occasion, can surpass the effectiveness of textual data due to its capacity to leave lasting impressions on the audience. In my study, some significant experiences were reproduced in the audiences' imagination when they reviewed personal photographs from my past (Chang, 2008). The visual images I incorporated generated subsequent knowledge, evoked memories, conveyed meanings, and stirred profound emotions, adding diverse layers and insights to the research (Glaw et al., 2017). Moreover, Glaw et al. (2017) enriched conventional data collection approaches in this study by enabling me to convey my thoughts and feelings through the selected images.

Another advantage of photographs is their ability to capture individuals, objects, locations, and the concealed social context and personal memories that these images evoke (Chang, 2008). As a result, an autoethnographer can gather visual information through observation, derive inferential insights through logical reasoning, and extract cultural knowledge by analysing photographs (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) posits that this trio of actions – observation, logical deduction, and interpretation – can be extended to the overarching procedure of analysing and comprehending visual images in autoethnography. In the end, the amalgamation of photographs, spoken feedback, and documented information enhances the research's validity and thoroughness through member verification (Glaw et al., 2017).

Documentation

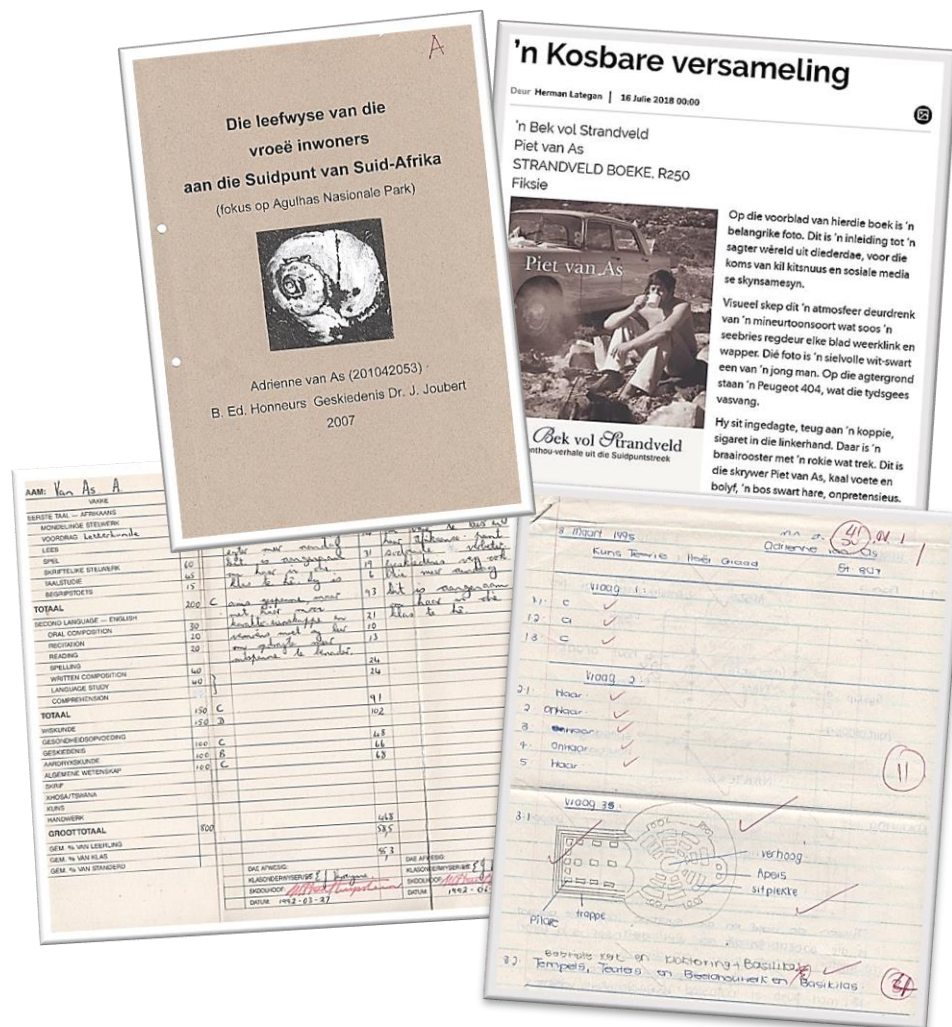
We live in a text-oriented society and can find ample textual artefacts that enhance our understanding of self and the context of our lives (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) states that these textual artefacts include officially produced documents and personal texts written about people or their cultural context, whether formal or informal. Documentation data sources encompass personal items like notes or diaries, interview notes and transcriptions, poetry, and visual art (Wall, 2006). Chang (2008) lists newspaper articles, bulletins, concert programmes, and write-ups about people or their surroundings as examples of the vast range of such documents. In general, an autoethnographer can use a variety of such documents, among others, diplomas, official letters, certificates, conscription papers, employment contracts, deeds, and announcements (Phifer, 2002, p. 78, as cited in Chang, 2008). Various official and unofficial documents in my cabinets validated significant moments of my life (Chang, 2008). In my cabinets of curiosities, I included, among others, certificates, reports, newspaper articles about my father (my appearance in a newspaper is not relevant), workbooks, textbooks, tests, and assignments that ranged from various periods in my life.

Documents issued by national or local social institutions frequently influence and govern the societal backdrop of an individual's existence (Chang, 2008). An autoethnographer's relationship with these organisations is publicly pronounced through these official documents, and, in turn, the social norms and standards they abide by are implicated (Chang, 2008). For example, award certificates define positive behaviour by social standards, while police records show the opposite. In addition to official documents, textual artefacts concerning people or authored by them are also valuable autoethnographic data (Chang, 2008). In particular, texts crafted personally hold immense value for research, capturing thoughts, feelings, and viewpoints in their authentic state, free from any research-driven biases. Examples leveraged by self-narrative authors include personal letters, essays, poems, and historical travel diaries.

As part of this autoethnography, I constructed and collected various documents related to my lived experience in history education. Figure 2.8 shows an assignment, a newspaper article about my father's book, a Standard 4 report card (hopefully too small for you to see my History results) and a high school Art History test.

Figure 2.8

Collection of a variety of documents related to my lived experience in history education



However, my written texts were limited in telling the truth about me, the space, and the context because they were incomplete, lost, or partial (Chang, 2008). Therefore, other non-textual artefacts and photographs were sought to fill the gaps of insufficient textual data. For an autoethnographic researcher, artefacts refer to any physical representations of their life, ordinary non-textual artefacts that occupy their space, and telling stories about their past and

present (Chang, 2008). Items like photographs, trinkets from a memory box, keepsakes, family treasures, souvenirs, videotapes, CD collections, and countless other objects serve as artefacts that, depending on the research inquiry, hold significant value as autoethnographic data and should not be overlooked.

Self-Observation and Self-Reflection

Strategies of self-observation and self-reflection are helpful in autobiographical fieldwork when trying to gain cultural perspectives on yourself (Chang, 2008). It is essential to differentiate between self-observation and self-reflection. Self-observation collects factual data about what happens during research, whereas self-reflection gathers introspective data representing your present perspectives. Chang (2008) suggests self-observation as self-introspection for the individual autoethnographer or interactive introspection while the autoethnographer interacts with others. It is a valuable data collection technique since it gives access to “covert, elusive, and personal experiences like cognitive processes, emotions, motives, concealed actions, omitted actions, and socially restricted activities” (Rodrigues & Ryave, 2002, p. 3). Self-observational data record your behaviours, thoughts, and emotions in natural contexts (Chang, 2008). For research, however, such self-observation needs to be disciplined by the intentionality of the research process. The autoethnographer’s plan of what to observe and how to observe it shapes systematic self-observation. It depends on your research purpose, which helps you to identify a specific focus or issue for self-observation. In addition, autoethnographers must carefully plan how to observe and record their self-observational data (Chang, 2008).

On the other hand, one of the most commonly used data collection techniques for ethnography is participant observation, in which researchers participate in the lives of their informants while observing their behaviours. Among the various methods, participant observation is the most characteristic of ethnographic work and the most important for autoethnographers (Duncan, 2004). Because autoethnography places value on the researcher’s personal experience, participant observation is the core practice for reflection

development and organising all other data collection activities. Autoethnographic data collection from the present is equivalent to ethnographic participant observation in that the researcher in either study collects data from naturally occurring environments while participating in activities (Chang, 2008). However, the difference is that the data collection field for autoethnography is the researcher's own life. By contrast, ethnographic participant observation focuses on the lives of others (that is, natives of the culture studied) (Chang, 2008) – the challenge of participant observation in autoethnography lies in mastering the art of self-reflection. Therefore, the autoethnographer must find and use a system of keeping reflections that suit the nature of the research setting.

An autoethnographer can use field journals to document and record unstructured or structured self-observation, reflections on self, and the research process (Chang, 2008). Adams et al. (2017) describe how autoethnographers write about their experiences in private contexts, everyday interactions, or feelings of dissonance or confusion. Composing a field journal helps the autoethnographer to become aware of the limiting nature of memory and bring details to the schematic landscape outline (Chang, 2007). Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 83) confirm that field notes “help fill in the richness, nuance, and complexity of the landscape, returning the reflecting researcher to a richer, more complex, and puzzling landscape than memory alone is likely to construct”.

While ethnographers record their emotions, some may document situations objectively (Chang, 2008). As a result, the division between subjectivity and objectivity becomes more blurred, especially in contemporary ethnographic fieldwork. However, some ethnographers acknowledge this division and allow for subjectivity and objectivity to blend. An autoethnographer can easily fall into self-absorption due to the highly self-reflective and introspective nature of autoethnography. Consequently, an autoethnographer must employ a methodical way of keeping a distance from this process (Chang, 2008).

Furthermore, Chang (2008) describes how the meta-cognitive activity of field journaling can provide purposeful and healthy interruptions during fieldwork to help an autoethnographer move into and out of the self-reflective state. In ethnography, field journals

help to record the researcher's private and personal thoughts and feelings about their research processes (Chang, 2008). A journal is kept separately from the field notes, which record more objective data. Nevertheless, keeping subjective feelings and objective facts separate is problematic because, while keeping field notes, ethnographers invariably apply their subjective judgement and interpretation. This is clear from the extract from one of my journals dated Thursday, 27 January 2023, which captured my reflection on structure as one of the transactional distance factors.

Thursday, 27 January 2022

This morning, I thought my tendency to focus on structure could be compared to a mall. Structure and navigation are essential for customer experience. Especially for new customers to the mall, it should not be difficult to move around and go where you want to go. Even for returning customers, it must be easy to move around. The mall cannot be different each time that you visit it!

What are the design criteria of a successful mall? I think the following aspects are essential: Layout and design, the entrances, and the variety of shops. There cannot only be clothing stores. There must also be restaurants, entertainment, book shops, cell phone shops, pet shops, supermarkets, pharmacies, toilets, and computer shops. A mall must not be too big. That is what I do not like about Somerset Mall. It feels like one is walking a mile from one end to another.

The customers do not visit the mall to watch a show by the architects, buildings, managers or shop assistants. They visit the mall because they need something else. Nevertheless, we do not disregard the role of architects, builders, managers or shop assistants in the mall. They are crucial to the whole mall experience.

If my module is compared to a mall, what is the role of the lecturer?

Semi-Structured Interviews and an Open-Ended Questionnaire

Autoethnographers can use various types of interviews, from oral histories to narratives to topical interviews. While participants recount social, historical, and political experiences and events from their perspectives in their oral histories, they also offer personal reflections on identity, events, or experiences in their personal narratives. In topical interviews, participants comment on specific subjects, issues, or processes (Adams et al., 2015). However, interviews are not commonly associated with autoethnography since this methodology focuses primarily on one's own life, while interviews are used to draw out the participants' experiences of the autoethnographer's life (Chang, 2008). Despite this perception, interviews with others are still valid for this research method for various reasons: to stimulate your memory, to fill in information gaps, to gather new information about you and other relevant topics, to validate your data, and to gain others' perspectives on you (Chang, 2008).

Chang (2008) guides grand and mini-tour questions in ethnographic interviews. A researcher can begin with a general, descriptive, and open-ended grand-tour question in a casual conversational setting. Then, they progress to mini-tour questions for more detailed and focused information (Spradley, 1979, as cited in Chang, 2008). Through interviews, a staple data construction and collection technique employed in ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher gathers information unavailable from participant observation (Chang, 2008). However, as Chang (2008) indicates, applying interviews to autoethnography fulfills a different purpose; they provide external data that provides contextual information to confirm, complement, or deny introspectively generated data.

In my cabinets of curiosities, I included interviews with various participants. First, there were interviews with four family members – my father, mother, and two younger brothers. In addition, I conducted online semi-structured interviews with the participating senior History and History Education students from the private higher institution where I lecture as a qualitative data collection strategy. I asked the participants predetermined but open-ended

questions (Given, 2008), which gave me more control over the interview topics than I would have had in unstructured interviews. Still, there was no fixed list of responses to each question (unlike structured interviews or questionnaires that use closed questions).

Typically, researchers using semi-structured interviews develop a written guide in advance. The interview guide may be specific, with carefully worded questions or a list of topics to be covered. The researcher may ask the questions in the order that they are written or move to and from the topic list based on the participant's responses. In either case, the themes of the interview guide are centred around the research questions and the preliminary conceptual model of the researcher's phenomenon (Given, 2008). Zoom, a cloud-based video conferencing service, was used for these interviews since Zoom is the platform that we, as lecturers, use to meet with students. These online interview sessions were recorded and transcribed.

An open-ended questionnaire was part of Social Sciences in Year 1 for the BEd Intermediate Phase students. All the first-year students who took Social Sciences as a module had to complete the open-ended questionnaire, but only the data of the participating students were anonymously used in this study. I asked the following five open-ended questions: What is history? What is the goal of history? What is the purpose of history education? How would you describe your history education experience in primary and high or secondary school? How do you think your perceptions of history and history education have developed until now?

Data Analysis

For this study, I mostly used Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to analyse the data, because this approach focuses in-depth on people's views, opinions, knowledge, and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2020). It also emphasises the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as an analytic resource and their reflexive engagement with the theory, literature, data, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Generally, thematic analysis is a term for analysing qualitative data that focuses on identifying themes (patterns of meaning) in qualitative data. Thematic analysis is one of three common approaches to analysing

ethnographic and autoethnographic data (Ellis, 2004). This autoethnographic data analysis is consistent with many forms of constructivist qualitative methodology (Farrel et al., 2015).

Furthermore, autoethnographic researchers inform the culture using reflexivity, or reflective practice involving personal reflection and social critique. They describe their own experiences and interrelationships among, for example, students, colleagues, and themselves (Finlay, 2008). Through reflexivity, autoethnography enables the researcher to look inward, studying themselves to create a reflexive dialogue with the piece's readers (Hayler, 2011).

Another reason for choosing RTA is that I could use it for a deductive or inductive analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2020). There are different approaches to RTA. For my study, I worked both inductively and deductively. In an inductive approach, the content of the data directs coding and theme development. In a deductive approach, the existing concepts or ideas direct the coding and theme development. In this study, the concepts and ideas linked to the factors of the theory of transactional distance and historical distance.

Braun and Clarke (2020) propose a six-phase process for data engagement, coding, and theme development, although I did not follow the process rigidly. As the researcher develops analytical skills, the phases can blend to some degree, and the process becomes increasingly recursive. Also, the analysis in an autoethnography is not performed in isolation from the data collection or constructions since the analysis and interpretation of data inform and enrich subsequent data collection elements (Chang, 2008). The latest description of the six-phase process includes becoming acquainted with the data, documenting initial observations, systematically categorising the data, identifying initial themes based on the categorised and organised data, then progressing to the development and examination of these themes, enhancing and precisely defining them, and ultimately, composing the research (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

While employing reflective thematic analysis as the primary method for data interpretation, it was crucial to recognize that the narrative itself served as a nuanced form of analysis. Intriguingly, the cabinet of curiosities, a metaphorical construct employed in the study, and the narrative took on a role of analysis distinct from traditional thematic analysis.

This departure strengthened the alignment between method and theory, showcasing the versatility and richness of the chosen approach. The utilization of the cabinet of curiosities as a form of analysis implied a departure from strict thematic categorization, allowing for a more dynamic exploration of the data, which in turn contributed to a deeper understanding of the underlying complexities within the narrative. This nuanced analytical perspective added a layer of depth to the study, fostering a holistic and comprehensive interpretation of the data.

Quality Assurance Measures: Trustworthiness

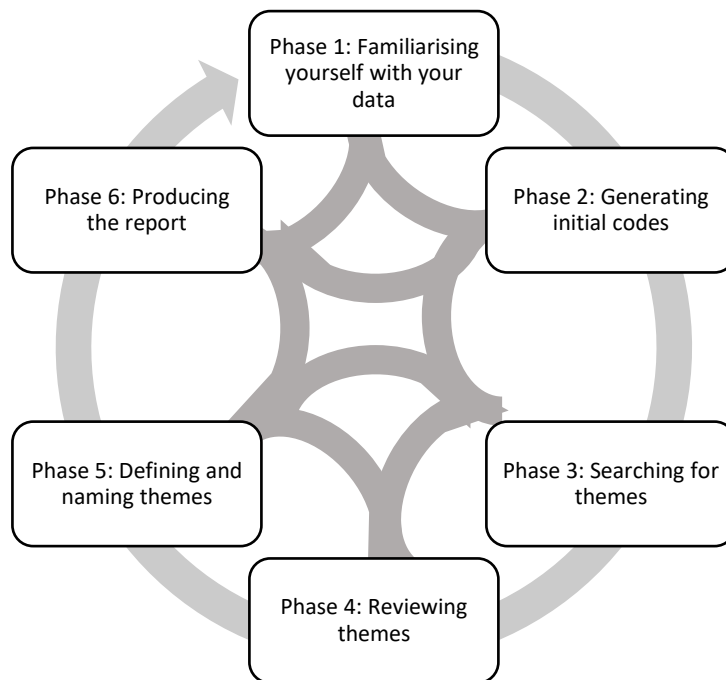
Qualitative researchers must demonstrate precise, consistent, and exhaustive data analysis to be considered trustworthy. The reader will then determine whether the process is credible based on the descriptions of the detailed records and the systematic disclosure of the methods of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, the researcher aims to design and include methodological strategies to ensure the findings' trustworthiness, unlike quantitative researchers who use statistical methods to establish the validity and reliability of the research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness are criteria of qualitative research that substitute for quantitative research's positivist criteria of validity and reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Initially, four criteria were used to develop and refine the concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985): credibility (paralleling internal validity), dependability (paralleling reliability), confirmability (paralleling objectivity), and transferability (paralleling external validity). A few years later, Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed another set of criteria to determine the authenticity of fairness, namely ontological authenticity (enlarges personal constructions), educative authenticity (leads to improved understandings of constructions of others), catalytic authenticity (stimulates to action), and tactual authenticity (empowers action). Guba and Lincoln added the fifth criterion of authenticity in 1994. Nowell et al. (2017) provide guidelines on how researchers might use Guba and Lincoln's criteria (1985) for trustworthiness during the different phases of thematic analysis (see Figure 2.9). In creating Figure 2.9, I initially intended to use the six proposed

phases of thematic analysis of Nowell et al. (2017). However, I realised that I could not work in a linear process – it needed to be more like a network, working to and from phases.

Figure 2.9

The six phases of thematic analysis of Nowell et al. (2017)



Methodological Limitations of This Research

Some limitations ought to be considered in spite of all the advantages of autoethnography as a method (Méndez, 2013). For example, the feelings evoked in readers might be disagreeable since the connections that readers make cannot be predicted (Bochner & Ellis, 1996, as cited in Méndez, 2013). Additionally, autoethnographic reporting of commonplace experiences might not capture the interest of scientists and practitioners (McIlveen, 2008).

Initially, the user and reader of autoethnography should accept the limitation that a sole autoethnographic analysis has no rightful purchase on generalisability. Still, it can act as an incentive for a deep understanding of a particular case and a stimulus to open new intellectual views for the reader.

Ethical Considerations

One of the main characteristics of autoethnography is its emphasis on the self, which involves the problematic ethical considerations of the method (Ellis, 2007, as cited in Méndez, 2013). This is a limitation because of the exposure of the researcher's thoughts and feelings, which require honesty and willingness to self-disclose. As a result, it might be difficult to answer an ethical question, making autoethnography a complicated method to follow (Méndez, 2013).

Evocative autoethnography describes periods of a researcher's life involving sensitive issues concerning the researcher and the people involved (Méndez, 2013; Wall, 2008). Therefore, the researcher should be mindful of the special considerations required when referring to people like family, partners, or close friends (Méndez, 2013). Even though sensitive issues are unprecedented at this stage of the study, the researcher cannot exclude the possibility of them arising during the data construction process. The issue of whether a participant will give their consent to be included in the narrative must be contemplated (Méndez, 2013; Miller & Bell, 2012). However, writing an autoethnography involves being ethical and honest about the events described and the content of the text expressed by all the people involved in these events (Méndez, 2013).

My family members who were interviewed understood what participation meant. These participants could also choose between individual or joint interviews, find an appropriate context for the interview, provide extended informed consent, explore motives for their participation, and discuss confidentiality and anonymity (Voltelen et al., 2018).

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria to conduct this research. Permission was also obtained from the Ethics Committee of the TOGI after I submitted the necessary documentation, including the application form, consent forms, and data collection instruments. All the information provided by the participants in this research was treated with confidentiality, and the identities of the participants will not be made known. Students who chose not to participate in the study were not negatively affected.

Conclusion to The Lobby

This chapter, The Lobby, described the research design and methodology of this autoethnography, which I dealt with earlier rather than later in the order of the thesis chapters (instead of the more traditional thesis layout), to help the reader navigate through the rooms to follow. In this room, I described my philosophical foundations (ontology and epistemology), the research paradigm and approach, autoethnography as a research methodology, and how I undertook the collection, construction, analysis, and interpretation of the data in my cabinets of curiosities. Finally, I described the measures I took to guarantee the trustworthiness of my findings and the ethical considerations.

The next room, Going down – Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room, focuses on this study's theoretical and conceptual framework. In that room, we explore the theory of transactional distance, historical distance, and the other theoretical and conceptual underpinnings relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 3: GOING DOWN – TRANSACTIONAL DISTANCE THEORY AND THE READING ROOM

Introduction to Going Down: Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room

In the previous room, The Lobby, I set out to share an overview of my philosophical foundations (ontology and epistemology) and the research paradigm and approach I employed in this study. Consequently, I explained autoethnography as a research methodology and discussed how I collected, constructed, analysed, and interpreted the data in my cabinets of curiosities. Finally, I described the process I undertook to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings and the ethical considerations of the study. The location of The Lobby was to assist the reader in understanding the process I undertook in this autoethnography.

I begin this chapter, Going Down: Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room (see Figure 3.1), by discussing some views on theory and its use; then, I concisely explain what a theoretical framework is and why it is needed. Next, I explore my original and initially chosen theoretical and conceptual framework, the theory of transactional distance, and explain how I assimilated this theory into my exploration of history education and my lived experience in this field. Furthermore, because of the strong connection between transactional distance theory and the corresponding literature, I consolidated them into a single space. Consequently, this chapter provides the lens through which I started crafting my autoethnography and is also one of the lenses through which I analysed my constructed data, as exhibited in the various cabinets of curiosities in Chapter 5.

When I first embarked on the proposal for this research project, my main focus was on online education, teacher preparation, history instruction, and transactional distance, a component of the distance education discipline. Although these original aspects finally formed a minor part of my thesis, I cannot disregard my original influences and the foundation they created. Gradually, as I explored and reflected on my life, my study included other aspects, like the theory of historical distance, which I focused on in the next room. This stance implies

that I focused on transactional distance in original classrooms with face-to-face learning engagements.

Figure 3.1

Going down to the foundations of the theory of transactional distance and the reading room



Note. In this chapter, we go down to the foundations of the theory of transactional distance and the reading room, which holds the literature review on this specific theory.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framing for This Study

A theory is a broad statement encompassing abstract concepts or ideas that assert, clarify, or envision connections or associations between various phenomena, all within the constraints of the theory's essential assumptions (Abend, 2008). Moore (1991), the father of the theory of transactional distance, reflects on what theory is and why it is essential. He states that a theory summarises and synthesises what is known in a field. When we understand how we organise our knowledge, we understand the underpinning theory of a study. In other words,

a theory is a structured, orderly, and methodical presentation of a collection of issues conveyed as a meaningful and unified entity (Reeves et al., 2008). As in my study, theories help to “design a research question, guide the selection of relevant data, interpret the data, and propose explanations of the underlying causes or influences of the observed phenomenon” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 1). In addition, understanding a theory assists practitioners in seeing where the research focus fits and interfaces with prior research. In essence, theory enables researchers to label their observations, comprehend and elucidate connections, and gain insight into human interactions (Abend, 2008).

For Moore (1991), it is crucial to base research on theory because research lacking a theoretical foundation is ineffective. An ungrounded theory might solve immediate problems, but it will struggle to contribute to other challenges in other contexts because it is unrelated to a theory. When research is rooted in theory, researchers transcend immediate and localised issues, leading to solutions and contributions that are both universal and enduring. Theory gives individuals a broader viewpoint, enhancing their ability to analyse phenomena more effectively. Moreover, it aids individuals in making decisions based on fundamental principles of education and learning rather than responding to emergencies or capitalising on sudden opportunities.

Most importantly, theories offer comprehensive and intricate conceptual insights into matters that are difficult to define, such as the functioning of societies, the operations of organisations, and the reasons behind specific forms of human interaction (Reeves et al., 2008). For me, it is about building on a foundation of what was created previously. Thus, we must stand on the shoulders of giants and education pioneers – I stood on the shoulders of those who focused on transactional distance, historical distance, history education, and autoethnography prior to my study. We should leverage the insights of influential thinkers who have preceded us to advance our intellectual pursuits. As far back as 1159, in *The Metalogicon*, John of Salisbury wrote of a comparison between us and small dwarfs positioned atop the shoulders of giants. (McGarry, 1955, p. 167). We perceive more and extend our vision further than those who came before us, not because we possess sharper eyesight or greater

physical stature, but because we are elevated and carried aloft by their towering intellectual accomplishments.

Qualitative researchers depend heavily on social and humanities theories to steer their research processes and shed light on their discoveries (Reeves et al., 2008). Reeves et al. (2008, p. 7) summarise these theories as “giv[ing] researchers different lenses through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework to conduct their analysis”. Ultimately, numerous perspectives can be employed to examine a problem, each highlighting a distinct aspect of it (Reeves et al., 2008). In this study, I used the lenses of transactional and historical distances to explore my lived experience in history education.

I was inspired by the work of Crawford (2020), who compared the conceptual and theoretical frameworks in research with the foundation of a house. It not only aids in comprehending all the elements of the study but also provides the reader with a clear understanding of the study’s context, much like how a blueprint elucidates the outline of a house. Grant and Osanloo (2014) use a similar notion; they compare a study’s theoretical and conceptual frameworks with two types of blueprints. The first type of blueprint, the floor plan, illustrates the interior details of the construction of a home from a top view (the conceptual framework). A conceptual framework is a comprehensive concept encompassing nearly every facet of the research. It encompasses the entire conceptualisation of a research project (Kivunja, 2018). It entails your approach to investigating the research problem or phenomenon, guiding the research direction, and establishing connections among the various factors within the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). According to Roediger III (1980), when confronted with an unfamiliar phenomenon, such as in my study, it is natural to link it to things we are familiar with, better understand, or are more acquainted with. When we can apply our previous knowledge to the new phenomenon, it becomes more comprehensible and falls into place. This endeavour to gain insight by relating new information to our existing knowledge is evident in scientific contexts and everyday life. In summary, scientists frequently employ

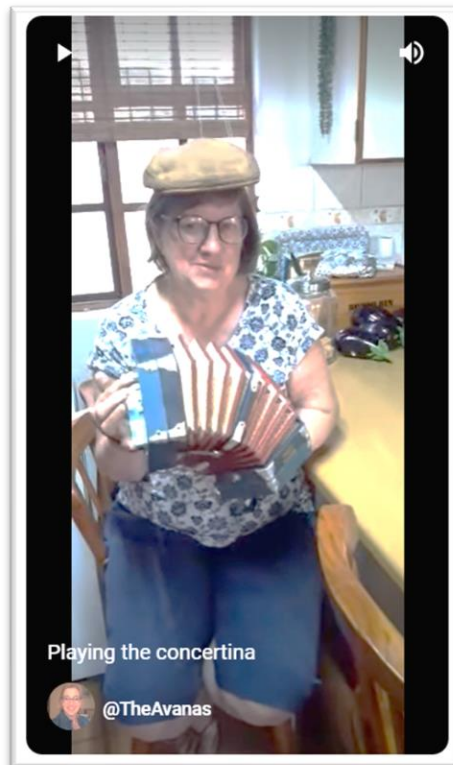
analogies, metaphors, and similes when formulating an explanatory account of a phenomenon.

The second type of blueprint, the elevation drawing, reflects the exterior of a building (the theoretical framework). A study's theoretical framework is one of the most important features that supports theory-driven thinking and acting. The blueprint of a study is a foundation on which all knowledge is constructed. Kivunja (2018) clarifies that the theoretical framework is based on the previously reviewed academic literature about a research topic. Thus, the theoretical framework undergirds your thinking about how you understand and plan to research the relevant theories, topics, concepts, and definitions.

This study explored the factors influencing transactional and historical distance in history education. From the outset, I recognised the theory of transactional distance as the foundational and guiding theoretical framework. However, due to the unique context and phenomenon and my exploration through the lens of transactional distance, I later added historical distance as another primary theoretical lens owing to the importance of a subject in transactional distance. Consequently, I explored transactional and historical distances as a concertina-like effect where each factor led to a certain distance. As depicted in Figure 3.2 and the video (see the link below), a concertina contains several bellows that expand and contract, with buttons on both ends, pushing air through the reeds to make a note. When the musician (the educator) plays the concertina, they consciously or unconsciously decide on the notes to play by pressing the buttons and pushing air through the reeds, creating a unique tune. This tune will either be melodic, harmonic, and tuneful or the opposite, dissonant, disharmonic, and tuneless, thus either creating longer or fewer distances.

Figure 3.2

My mother playing a concertina for the first time (video by Piet van As)

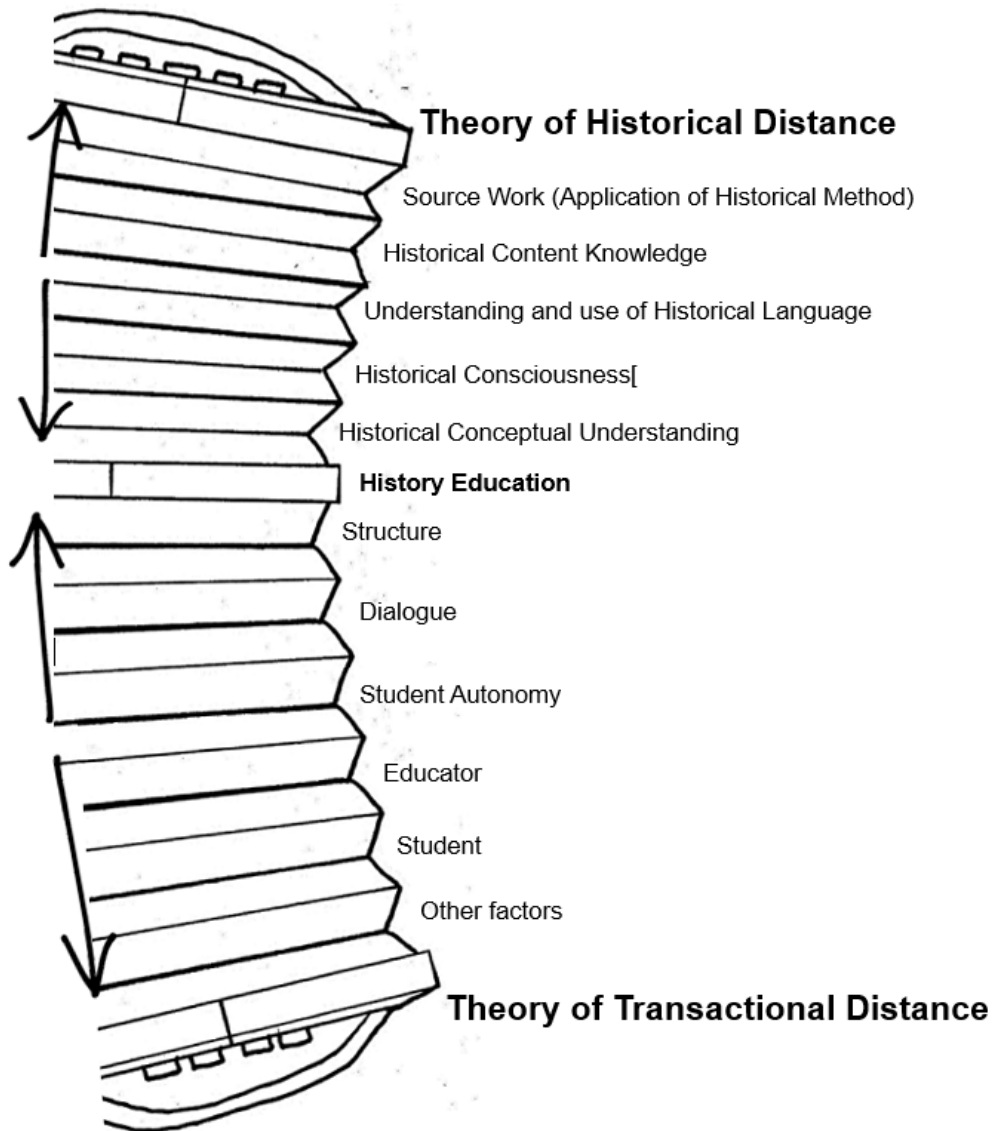


[Click here to watch a video of my mother playing a concertina for the first time](#)

In this study, I explored how two theories, transactional distance and historical distance, and their factors (as depicted in Figure 3.3) influenced the distances I experienced throughout my life in history education.

Figure 3.3

The concertina effect of transactional and historical distances where each factor leads to the perceived distances



Towards the Development of a Theory on Transactional Distance

Distance education pedagogics are based on various practical methods and theoretical approaches: the tradition of academic teaching, higher education pedagogies, and the pedagogies and theories of adult and continuing education (Peters, 1999). Although distance education faces a particular set of problems in adult education that pursue specific goals, the various practical methods and theoretical approaches imply that problems can be

experienced in any learning environment (Swain, 1996). As a result, I dedicated my attention to the foundational elements that contributed to the evolution of the theory of transactional distance. These foundational components proved instrumental in enhancing my comprehension of transactional distance within the diverse learning environments that are the focal point of this autoethnography.

In the 1970s, there were no examples to lean on for distance-teaching universities to bridge the distance between universities and students and enable guided self-study (Peters, 1999). Courses had to be detailed, arranged, produced, and distributed. The challenge was to stimulate learning processes from a distance and support, promote, and evaluate them. In this regard, empirical research on teaching and learning informed planning, design, intervention, control, and evaluation procedures as tools for educational technology and instructional design to develop large-scale systems. However, critics overlooked the advantages of these methods while education technology-enabled distance education universities handled these innovations theoretically and practically. Distance education research on practical learning and teaching, development and evaluation, and social sciences in the 1970s and 1990s aimed to address the problems experienced.

Throughout history, distance education has often been moulded by the advent of new technology rather than being primarily propelled by pedagogical innovation (Barbour & Reeves, 2006). Moore (1997, as cited in Barbour & Reeves, 2006) expressed concern about the exaggerated claims regarding the benefits of technology in distance education. Now, however, in discussing internet technologies, Moore (2002, as cited in Barbour & Reeves, 2006) proposed that achieving tremendous success in distance education programmes might be attainable if those tasked with creating and managing these programmes initially gain a solid grasp of the essential principles, philosophy, concepts, and methodology inherent to the field. He also acknowledged the potential of newer technologies in distance education and appears to have held an optimistic view of the future (Barbour & Reeves, 2006). Barbour and Reeves (2006, p. 3) further note that despite these critiques, “educational technology and distance education researchers continue to examine the transactional distance theory

expressed by Moore”. However, in 2022, Moore (2022) once again asserts that a prominent driving force in the history of distance education has been using communication technologies to overcome the geographical gap between students and educators.

Researchers and theoreticians who conducted theoretical studies and contributed significantly to understanding distance education initially drove the development process of the distance education theory (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005, p. 1). Gokool-Ramdoo (2008, p. 4) used the scientific metaphor of an international theory that “carries the stem cells of other theories”, as many previous theorists had redirected their work towards Moore’s theory of transactional distance after examining their theories. Transactional distance theory addresses organisational and transactional aspects while focusing on the student, the institution, and the broader context. Consequently, many authors have emphasised Moore’s concept of transactional synergy rather than solely concentrating on organisational synergy.

The first attempts at creating theoretical approaches to distance learning started in the 1950s (Giossos et al., 2009; Keegan, 2013). As Holmberg fittingly pointed out towards the end of the 1980s, theoretical approaches in research provided potential hypotheses about the expected outcomes under particular conditions and circumstances. These approaches also shed light on the practices and procedures that could lead to success in distance learning (Giossos et al., 2009; Simonson et al., 1999).

Theoretical contributions from scholars like Holmberg (1989), Garrison (1989), Keegan (1986), Moore (1993), Peters (1983), and Verduin and Clark (1991, as cited in Gorsky & Caspi, 2005) significantly enriched our understanding of distance education. Keegan (1986) elaborated on four historical approaches to developing distance education theory and, employing a post-industrial model, outlined three avenues for exploring and advancing distance education. This concept of industrialised, open, and non-traditional learning had the potential to transform educational practices. First, Keegan referred to the theories of independence and autonomy that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, as articulated by Wedemeyer (1977) and Moore (1973). These theories underscored the pivotal role of student independence. Secondly, Peters (1971) worked on a theory of industrialisation in the 1960s,

which focused on distance education as an industrialised form of the teaching and learning process. The third approach combined theories related to interaction and communication (Badth, 1982, 1987; Daniel & Marquis, 1979, as cited in Keegan, 1986). Subsequently, a fourth category of theories emerged, aiming to elucidate distance learning by amalgamating communication theories with educational philosophy (Giossos et al., 2009; Keegan, 2013).

Historical Approaches and Theoretical Perspectives of the Theory of Transactional Distance

I cannot write about transactional distance without focusing on the building blocks that led to the establishment of such a theory. Moore (2018) notes that before we can look at the theory of transactional distance, we should note the historical context in which it initially emerged. Thus, several role players contributed to the new transactional distance pedagogical theory.

Wedemeyer on Independent Study (1971)

According to Garrison (2000), Wedemeyer's emphasis on the pedagogical underpinnings of independent study marked a shift from the predominant focus on organisational and administrative aspects in distance education research to a greater emphasis on educational matters related to distance learning. Wedemeyer focused on independent study instead of mere correspondence study (Garrison, 2000). A common requirement in all distance education settings was that students should demonstrate varying levels of self-management. According to Moore (2018), the acknowledgement of the crucial role played by students in independently managing their learning was influenced by Wedemeyer's definition of independent study (1971), as well as the research conducted by Rogers (1969), Maslow (1968), and other humanistic psychologists. Wedemeyer (1977, 1981) pinpointed vital components of independent learning, including increased student responsibility, diverse media and methods, readily accessible instruction, accommodation of individual differences, and flexible learning schedules. In addition, Wedemeyer placed

significant emphasis on student freedom, choice, equity, and access. His approach to independent study aligned with the concepts of self-directed learning and self-regulation, and his ideas were consistent with the principles of humanism and andragogy (McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996).

As Garrison (2000) outlined, Wedemeyer's shift in focus from administrative and organisational concerns to independent study's pedagogical assumptions marked a departure in distance education. This shift emphasised educational aspects related to learning at a distance. Wedemeyer's attention was directed towards independent study rather than mere correspondence study, underscoring the universal requirement in all distance education settings for students to take on varying degrees of self-management.

According to Moore (2018), the acknowledgement of the pivotal role played by students in managing their learning to different extents when separated from their educators was influenced by Wedemeyer's definition of independent study (1971). This recognition also drew from the research of Rogers (1969), Maslow (1968), and other humanistic psychologists. Wedemeyer (1977, 1981) identified critical elements of independent learning, including heightened student responsibility, a diverse blend of media and methods, widely accessible instruction, accommodation of individual differences, and flexible learning schedules.

Peters' Industrialisation Model (1967–1993)

In Peters' industrial production model, developed during the 1960s, an in-depth analysis of the structure of distance education was conducted with a recognition of the potential application of industrial production techniques. Through a comparative perspective, it was determined that the fundamental principles of industrialisation significantly influenced the structure of distance education. These principles included rationalisation, division of labour, assembly line processes, mechanisation, mass production, preparatory work, planning, organisational efficiency, scientific control methods and management, formalisation, standardisation, functional transformation, objectification, concentration, and centralisation (Peters, 1967, 2010). In addition, Garrison (2000) characterised the industrial production

model as an organisational structure that highly emphasised dividing tasks efficiently, organising them effectively, and engaging in mass production to attain economies of scale and lower per-unit costs. This organisational structure continues to exert a significant influence on distance education.

Understanding the evolution of distance education theory and its challenges hinges on the prominence of concerns related to the structure and organisation of the industrial model, as opposed to those concerning the actual teaching and learning processes (Garrison, 2000). Over time, the teaching process gradually transformed, marked by increased mechanisation and automation (Peters, 1967). These changes gave rise to specific structural characteristics. First, the preparatory work became as crucial as developing and producing distance study courses. Secondly, the effectiveness of the teaching process became contingent upon thorough planning and organisation. Thirdly, a course needed to be formalised. Fourthly, student expectations had to be standardised. Lastly, it was necessary to make the teaching process more objective. It is worth highlighting that the cost-effectiveness of distance education is contingent on resource availability and centralised administration.

Consequently, adopting an industrial viewpoint, Peters (1967) described distance education as a streamlined approach, incorporating the division of tasks to deliver knowledge. This method simplifies the replication of structured teaching processes by implementing principles of industrial organisation and using technology extensively. Consequently, it enables many students to concurrently engage in university-level education, regardless of location or profession.

Holmberg's Theory of Teaching in Distance Education (1989)

Holmberg has made considerable contributions to distance education theory over the last several decades (Garrison, 2000). He believes that guided didactic conversation is central to distance (Gokool-Ramdoe, 2008; Holmberg, 1995; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Distance education should resemble a two-way conversation facilitated through written or other mediated forms of interaction between both students and educators (Holmberg, 1995).

Conversations in the context of distance education encompass real-time dialogues and simulated interactions, with a greater emphasis on the latter. The simulated conversation goes beyond an internalised dialogue from studying text; it represents a dynamic relationship between educators and students (Lewis, 1975, cited in Holmberg, 1995). This relationship is created by an easily readable and reasonably colloquial presentation style and the course's atmosphere. The primary focus lies on the content and the conversational nature of the written pre-produced course materials. However, Holmberg (1989, as cited in Garrison, 2000) recognises that effective communication between students and educators remains crucial, irrespective of how conversational the pre-produced course material may be.

Moore's Theory of Distance Education

In 1972, the first attempt was made to articulate a theory for distance education (Moore, 1972, 1991, 1997) at the World Conference of the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE). Moore (1973) referred to the increase in the number of people who did not attend traditional institutions and chose distance education instead. Consequently, it became essential to shift focus and allocate resources towards defining and describing the field, reducing distinctions among the various aspects of distance education, identifying crucial components across diverse modes of instruction, and constructing a theoretical framework capable of comprehensively encompassing this unique education domain.

The initial theory of distance education was conceptualised as the geographic separation between educators and students and a cognitive gap resulting from the geographical distance that hindered understanding and perception (Moore, 1991). This theory explored these spaces or gaps between student and educator, typical in asynchronous distance education (Akin, 2014). Educators, students, and organisations had to work collectively to surmount this physical or metaphorical distance to facilitate meaningful, intentional, and well-structured learning experiences (Moore, 1991).

As outlined by Moore, crucial components were discerned through empirical research, content analysis of numerous descriptions of educational courses, and examination of relevant literature. Initially, three overarching factors – concepts, variables, and principles or clusters – were generated, delineating the scope of distance education across three dimensions (Moore, 2012, 2018). These three overarching factors are discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

When referencing Moore, it is important to acknowledge his extensive contributions to distance education, including his work on transactional distance and related aspects dating back to the 1970s.

Keegan's Theory of Reintegration of the Teaching and Learning Acts (1993)

Keegan believes that distance education should be carried out similarly to face-to-face educational transactions by reconstructing moments during the teaching–learning interaction (Gokool-Ramdoo, 2008; Keegan, 1993). According to Gokool-Ramdoo (2008) and Keegan (2013), one approach to mitigating the distance between educators and students involves employing a theoretical framework that emphasises the reintegration of teaching actions, thereby fostering a connection between the learning process and the educational materials. This perspective contrasts with the views of Moore and Holmberg, for whom preparation represents both an opportunity and a challenge for self-directed students (Amundsen, 1993, as cited in Gokool-Ramdoo, 2008). Nevertheless, Keegan's view is also essential as Holmberg and Moore consider the recreation of face-to-face educational transactions (Gokool-Ramdoo, 2008). Moreover, Holmberg and Moore express greater confidence in the student's capacity to assume responsibility, whereas Keegan holds a different perspective. Many critical elements of this theory are integrated into transactional distance theory (Gokool-Ramdoo, 2008).

Theory of Transactional Distance

Transactional distance was initially introduced in Boyd's *Handbook of Adult Education* in 1980 (Boyd & Apps, 1980). Dewey (as cited by Boyd & Apps, 1980) defines a transaction as the dynamic interaction involving the environment, individuals, and behaviour patterns in a given situation. For Boyd (1966) and Boyd and Apps (1980), a transaction happens between educators and students in an environment with the unique characteristic of physically separating educators from students, like an online learning environment, which leads to different individual and outstanding teaching and learning patterns and behaviours. Ultimately, the distance profoundly affects teaching and learning and points to a psychological and communications space. As a result, transactional distance refers to the separation between an educator's and a student's comprehension and communication due to geographical distance. Closing this gap necessitates implementing particular instructional design techniques and facilitating interaction (Moore, 2018; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Moreover, transactional distance can be characterised as a psychological divide or space where potential misinterpretations may occur between educators' and students' actions, inputs, and outputs (Moore, 1991, 1997; Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

Moore formulated the theory of transactional distance to investigate the gap or space between the student and the educator (Akin, 2014). Like Moore, I wanted to explore the gap or space between educators and students. However, unlike Moore, I focused not only on my online learning experiences as a lecturer, but also on the transactional distances I have experienced and how I was affected by the distance I experienced in history education throughout my life as a child, a student, and an educator (lecturer). In the following pages, I describe the macro factors in more detail and refer to the lesser-known factors that influence transactional distance.

Three Main Factors of Transactional Distance

As early as 1972, during the nascent stages of distance education, Moore (2012) discerned three overarching factors, namely structure, dialogue, and student autonomy (as depicted in Figure 3.4). He arrived at these factors through empirical research and an

extensive content analysis of numerous programme descriptions and related literature. The initial factor, drawn from examining the curricula delivered through the technologies available at the time, pertained to the structural aspects of the teaching–learning programme. The second factor, revolving around dialogue in the context of learning engagement, was derived from an analysis of communications between educators and students. Lastly, the third factor encompassed the extent to which students exhibited varying degrees of autonomy in determining what they learned, the depth of their learning, and their chosen learning methods.

Figure 3.4

Structure, dialogue, and student autonomy influence the transactional distance between students and educators (Moore, 2012)



In the following paragraphs, I provide detailed explanations and insights into the three main factors: structure, dialogue, and student autonomy.

As a cluster of variables, structure refers to the elements of learning engagement design or how a teaching engagement is structured in the delivery through various platforms and communication media (Moore, 1991). It is clear from the literature that various elements can be structured. The structure was initially described as the extent to which content, sequence, pace, and feedback were organised (Saba & Shearer, 1994). Saba and Shearer (2018) later described every learning engagement as comprising learning goals, thematic content, informational materials, case studies, multimedia elements such as audio, video, and graphics, as well as exercises, projects, and assessments. In addition, the outcomes, teaching strategies, assessment methods, organisation, and delivery could also be structured (McBrien

et al., 2009; Moore, 1991, 1997, 2018). A learning engagement could also include planned interactions between the students and educators, usually among students themselves (Saba & Shearer, 2018).

Moore (1997) outlined a comprehensive process for structuring learning engagements in his work. This process involves several key elements that should be integrated into every educational interaction. First, it emphasises the importance of effectively delivering information, skills, models, attitudes, and values to students. This content should be presented to maximise its potency and impact. Furthermore, Moore's approach recognises the critical role of motivation in learning. To support students, educators should stimulate their interest in the subject matter and work towards maintaining that interest throughout the learning process. Additionally, encouraging self-motivation is seen as essential to encouraging students to take ownership of their learning journey. In the quest to foster critical thinking, Moore's process recommends structuring higher-order cognitive skills. This involves guiding students in analysing and critiquing the material presented. It also calls for educators to challenge students' thinking and provide assistance when needed.

Guidance is another vital component. Educators are encouraged to offer advice and counsel on various aspects of learning, including the use of learning materials, study techniques, and additional resources. While some of these aspects can be anticipated and addressed within the educational materials, individualised advice and counsel are often necessary to cater to specific needs. Creating opportunities for practice, application, testing, evaluation, and feedback is another critical aspect of Moore's approach. Traditionally, written assignments have been the primary means to achieve this. However, in the 21st century, alternative formats are becoming increasingly important. Additionally, a well-structured learning engagement should provide opportunities for dialogue, helping students apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills through interaction. Lastly, Moore highlights the importance of allowing students to contribute to knowledge creation. This involves testing lessons in high-quality distance education settings to assess factors such as the time required for students to achieve desired outcomes and the effectiveness of assessment questions.

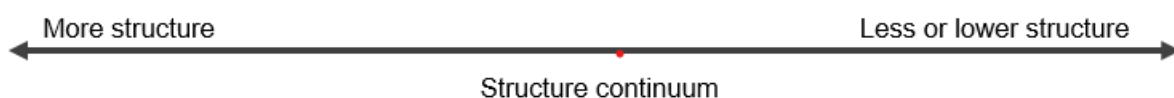
Based on feedback and observations, the learning engagement can be tailored to optimise the learning experience (Moore, 2012, 2018).

We should see the focus on individual needs when structuring the different elements of a learning engagement. The concept of structure pertains to the degree to which a learning experience can adapt and be sensitive to the individual needs of each student (Moore, 1983, 1991, 1997, 2018). The quality of instruction depends not only on how carefully these elements are composed but also on how appropriately they are composed for each student (Saba & Shearer, 2018). For example, I used various types of presentations and assignments with text, audio, and video combination variations in my modules.

Figure 3.5 shows the continuum of structure, indicating whether the learning engagements are characterised by rigidity or flexibility. Throughout my life (as stored and exhibited in my cabinets of curiosities), I have experienced the extent of this structure continuum. For instance, the structure of the History modules I designed and lectured at the TOGI was relatively high. By contrast, what I learned about the past through my father's stories hardly had any structure.

Figure 3.5

Variations in the structure of a learning engagement (Moore, 2018)



Therefore, it is best to understand the structure of a learning engagement when an exceedingly high degree of structure is evident. With high structure, the learning engagement seems like a one-way presentation, neglecting the potential of dialogue that can positively influence the learning process (Moore, 1997).

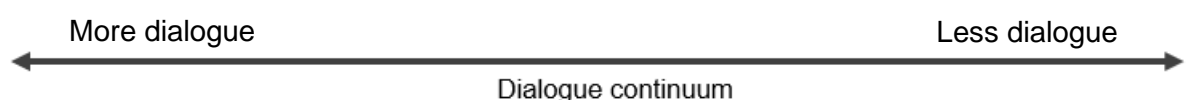
By comparison, the students are more involved in planning the learning engagement when there is less structure (Moore, 2018). There are various student actions in a learning engagement with a lower structure. Students will define their learning objectives, navigate the

content, align it with the lesson's goals, and potentially negotiate other adaptations with the educator. Furthermore, students might engage in more frequent internet research, search for videos on platforms like YouTube, explore a wide range of recommended websites, or listen to podcasts at their own pace (Moore, 2018). These students only submit assignments when ready and contact the educator when they need advice. Naturally, learning can also happen without a plan as an ordinary learning engagement of living, unintentionally or intentionally, when pursued.

The second component of transactional distance is dialogue, which pertains to how students and educators interact and communicate in a given learning situation (Moore, 1983). Thus, dialogue is a form of interpersonal interaction where interaction makes dialogue purposeful, valued, and constructive, with the educator and students being respectful and active listeners (Moore, 1997, 2018); after all, dialogue does not only happen when an educator gives instructions. Dialogue exhibits positive qualities and functions synergistically, where each participant in the conversation enhances the discussion by building upon the remarks of others. In essence, each party actively contributes and adds to the diverse contributions of the others involved (Moore, 2018). Dialogue happens after the learning engagement is designed and is aimed at the student's knowledge creation based on the educator's exchange of words and other symbols (Moore, 2012). When there is no dialogue in a learning engagement, there is no input from the students, and it is challenging for the educator to reorganise and improve the teaching and learning elements. Consequently, there can be various variations between the extremes of dialogue (see Figure 3.6), which can include or allow almost continuous dialogue between educators and students (Moore, 2018).

Figure 3.6

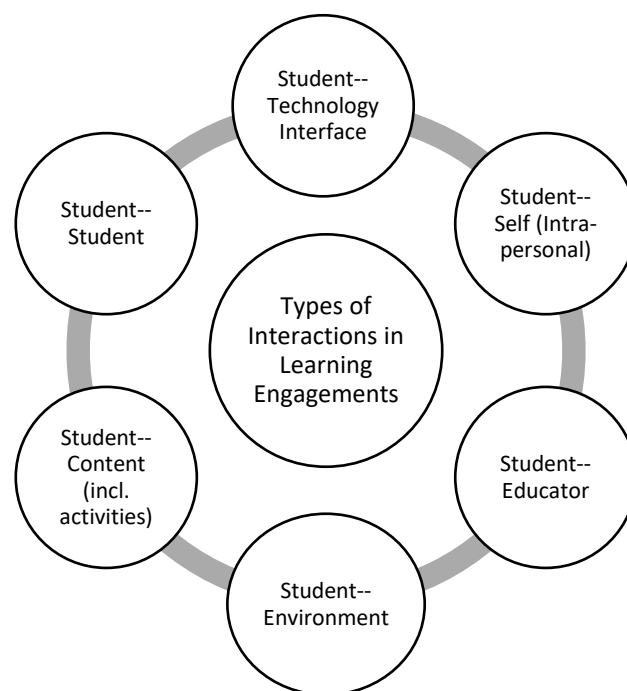
Variations of dialogue in a learning engagement (Adapted from Moore, 2018)



Each learning opportunity must be designed and organised to include each type of interaction, as seen in Figure 3.7 (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Initially, Moore delineated three categories of interaction: student–student interaction, student–content interaction, and student–educator interaction (Moore, 1989; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). However, online learning and 21st-century education have tremendous potential to spur interaction beyond the blurry boundaries of traditional learning environments, both in face-to-face and distant environments. Consequently, three more types of interaction were added: student–interface (Hillman et al., 1994), student–environment (context) (Peng et al., 2008), and student–self (intra-personal) (Peng et al., 2008). Hillman et al. (1994) argue that the effectiveness of interaction hinges on a student’s comfort level with the delivery medium that facilitates interaction with content, educators, and fellow students. Additionally, Peng et al. (2008) introduced the concept of student–context interaction, which signifies the interactivity where a system adjusts to meet individual needs, and student–selfinteraction, which denotes the interactivity that encourages self-management and introspection within an individual.

Figure 3.7

Types of interaction in learning engagements



Note. This diagram is based on the work of various authors, namely Moore (1989), Hillman et al. (1994), Chou (2003), Peng et al. (2007), and Peng et al. (2008).

Students typically cultivate and sustain a favourable attitude towards the learning process when engaging actively across various interactions (Yilmaz & Karaoglan-Yilmaz, 2019, as cited in Karaoglan-Yilmaz et al., 2022). As a result, students are likely to attain more efficient and effective learning outcomes, leading to greater satisfaction (Çağiltay et al., 2001; Yilmaz & Keser, 2017, as cited in Karaoglan-Yilmaz et al., 2022).

During my life, I have experienced how the type and level of dialogue have made a difference; for example, during visits to places with historical significance and in all my father's stories, there was more dialogue compared to little or no dialogue during my History lessons. The difference in dialogue affected my knowledge, conceptual understanding, skills, and the variety of distances that I experienced between other educators and me, the content and me, and my fellow students and me. The type and level of dialogue are present in all my cabinets of curiosities, which capture my lived experience in history education.

Investigations into autonomy and self-directed learning contribute to incorporating student autonomy as the third major component in the framework of transactional distance theory. Student autonomy encompasses the level of influence that students wield over their learning processes, and the degree of autonomy delineates the roles of students and the extent to which they exercise control in determining what, how, and how much they learn (Moore, 2012). Autonomous students increase their knowledge base autonomously instead of focusing on set material (Hockings et al., 2015). According to Henri et al. (2017), student autonomy is typically defined by several key themes, including a sense of ownership or responsibility for learning outcomes, confidence in one's skills and ability to achieve, active engagement in student-led learning, and the distinction between surface and deep learning approaches. Additionally, student autonomy encompasses the willingness to be proactive, assume control, self-monitor one's learning, and be willing to take risks (Foniadou et al., 2017). Furthermore, Foniadou et al. (2017) define student autonomy as the capacity to establish

objectives, operate independently, and make choices regarding materials, methods, and tasks. In essence, student autonomy is closely associated with individuation, which pertains to how students can exercise autonomy in shaping the structure of their learning experience.

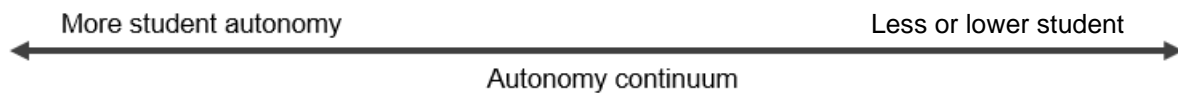
Peters (2010) referred to different angles or dimensions of the phenomenon of self-learning (instead of referring to synonyms). These include independent study, independent learning, self-study, individual learning, self-directed inquiry, and self-teaching, among others. Thus, autonomy is broad and deep because it is rooted in philosophical and educational traditions in many ways and has considerable psychological and sociological bearings. To be fully autonomous, students must actively participate in their learning through meta-cognition, motivation, and behaviour. All learning needs a minimum of active participation and self-motivation of students (Peters, 2010). Identity, self-realisation, and self-reliance are established and developed through intrinsic motivation and personal growth (Peters, 2010).

Several factors have contributed to the renewed interest in autonomy during the latter part of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century (Peters, 2010). Three theoretical trends are among these: first, the classical theory of education; second, the modern theory of vocational and professional qualifications; and third, the theory of learning, especially cognition and constructivism (cf. Huber, 2000, cited in Peters, 2010). In addition, there is a movement towards lifelong learning and humanistic, solid, non-traditional, and open education (Peters, 2010). Innovative educators foster the tradition of autonomous learning. Some students grew up with and on the internet and have experienced a degree of online learning and non-linear thinking. The increase of interest in autonomy is also evident in the increase of scholarly activity where scholars and researchers focus on exploring relevant issues of autonomous learning, resulting in many publications and much information. Peters (2010) reported 17 000 references to the term “autonomous student” in a Google search. Eleven years later, in 2021, there were 49 400 references to the same term in a new Google search (9 390 references in Google Scholar). In a 2022 Google search, 102 000 references to the term “autonomous student” were found. There has been a clear escalation in using the same term throughout recent years.

Early studies showed that students had varying degrees of ability to manage their learning and exercise autonomy (Moore, 2018). According to Moore (2018), not all distance students were entirely or even highly autonomous – an aspect often misunderstood in the past. The degree, range, level, or extent of the variations of this autonomy are shown in Figure 3.8. At one end of the continuum, students can set their objectives, determine their achievements, and control the extent of their learning. Conversely, when autonomy is limited, students have fewer opportunities to make decisions regarding their learning (Foniadou et al., 2017). Some students want greater autonomy in learning engagements, while others wish for less. Therefore, Moore advises educators to include a range of autonomy, even within the same learning engagement. Educators should aspire to ascertain the most suitable level of autonomy for each student and the design and implementation of every learning engagement (Moore, 2018).

Figure 3.8

Variations of autonomy in a learning engagement (Foniadou et al., 2017; Moore, 2018)



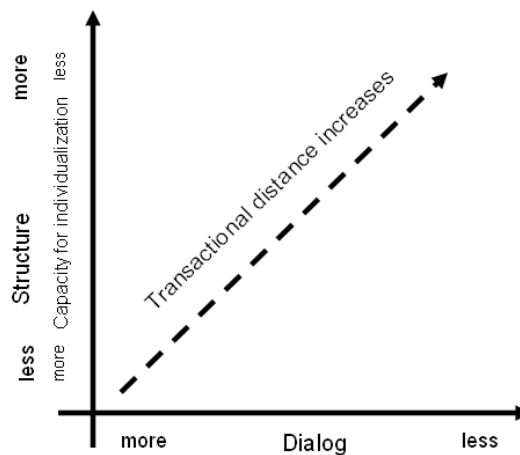
Relationship Between the Factors in the Theory of Transactional Distance

In any given learning engagement, there will always be variations in the amount of dialogue, the level of structure, and the extent of student autonomy compared to other learning experiences. Aluko et al. (2011, p. 1) confirm “the importance of the relationships between dialogue, structure, and autonomy” in learning material. The theory of transactional distance acknowledges the spectrum of possible degrees of structure and dialogue, suggesting that every learning engagement exhibits varying levels of transactional distance, with some having more and some less transactional distance than others (Moore, 2012, 2018). Transactional distance is a continuous variable, not a distinct or separate category (Moore, 1991, 1997), and dialogue and structure are transactional distance variables (Akin, 2014). How the factors of

structure and dialogue determine transactional distance was illustrated graphically by Moore (2018) (see Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9

The transactional distance relationship between the structure of a learning engagement and dialogue (Moore, 2006, 2018)



Moore (2018), Saba and Shearer (1994), and Gorsky and Caspi (2005) summarised various relations between the three macro factors of the theory of transactional distance. First, there is an inverse relationship between dialogue and transactional distance, meaning that as one increases, the other decreases. Therefore, when dialogue decreases, transactional distance tends to increase (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005; Moore, 2006). Second, an increased structure decreases the extent of dialogue, increasing transactional distance (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005; Moore, 2018; Saba & Shearer, 1994). Third, as structure increases, transactional distance increases (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005; Moore, 2018). In other words, the transaction between the educator and the students is high in a highly structured learning engagement with little or no dialogue (Deza & Deza, 2006). The transactional distance between the educator and the student is high if the structure is low and the student–educator dialogue is non-existent or insufficient (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005).

One of the key factors influencing the extent to which transactional distance can be reduced is the feasibility and method of facilitating dialogue between students and educators (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005). Managing transactional distance is about controlling the structure and

dialogue in a learning engagement, as these factors are related. In education, distance is not determined by physical proximity but rather by the degree and pace of structure and dialogue within the learning environment (Moore, 1983; Saba & Shearer, 1994). However, the extent of the distance makes the proper structuring of instructions and the proper use of quality dialogue to reduce transactional distance very demanding (Moore, 1991).

Moore (1997) notes that productive dialogue and structuring to overcome transactional distance requires many skills, systematic organisation, deployment, procedures, and opportunities. These are instructional design and interaction procedures (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). The educator can provide appropriate opportunities for quality dialogue between the educator and the student and adequately structured learning materials (Moore, 1991). Reducing transactional distance also requires changing the traditional roles of educators and students. The underlying dynamics of transactional distance enlighten educators to create an educational programme by balancing structure and dialogue to fit the intended purpose of a learning engagement (Stirling, 1997).

Transactional distance gives educators a theoretical framework to create an effective learning environment. Consequently, as Moore (2011) states, learning engagements lean either to one relatively highly structured, quasi-industrial extreme, owing to behaviourist and cognitivist learning theories, or to more humanist and constructivist perspectives of student-centred pedagogies with higher levels of dialogue and a more supportive educator.

Peters, who is part of Boyd's group of researchers from Tübingen, notes the significance of the degree of distance, as indicated by Moore, stating that transactional distance must be shown as a variable and not a fixed quantity because of the interplay or relation between dialogue, structure, and autonomy (Moore, 2012). Peters (1999) also argues that transactional distance theory presents a compelling explanation of the remarkable adaptability of distance education. It does so by representing transactional distance not as a fixed constant but as a variable that evolves through the dynamic interaction between dialogue, the degree of structure in the educational programme, and students' autonomy. Furthermore, this theory offers valuable insights into the intricate pedagogical challenges

inherent in distance education. There is a direct relationship between transactional distance and student autonomy. When the level of structure is high and the level of dialogue is low in a learning context, students must exercise greater autonomy (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005; Moore, 2006). However, the opposite is also true. In a learning situation characterised by low structure, high levels of dialogue, and consequently low transactional distance, students must actively engage in frequent and continuous dialogue to receive necessary information and guidance. Therefore, educators and instructional materials must allow modifications that suit the student's needs, learning style, and pace (Moore, 2018). For example, learning engagements with low dialogue and structure require more student autonomy (Moore, 2006). In a learning engagement with less structure, students are more involved in the planning process (Moore, 2018). In other words, the looser the structure, the more autonomy the student shows. Students with high autonomy require less dialogue and structure (Moore, 2006). Additionally, courses characterised by lower levels of transactional distance are likely to be more appealing to students who may have lower confidence in their ability to self-manage their learning. In other words, with more transactional distance, students receive more opportunities to exercise autonomy (Moore, 1991, 2006).

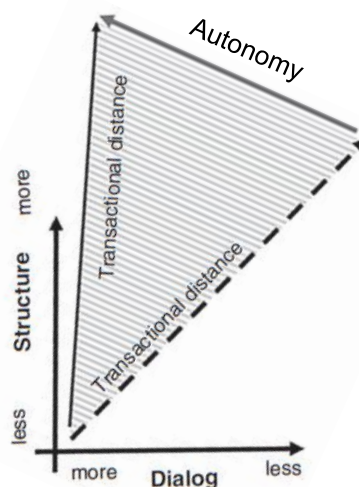
Since students are essential actors in a teaching–learning transaction, a potential autonomous ability can significantly affect the transactional distance of any learning engagement (Moore, 1997). According to Moore (2018), highly autonomous students rely less on extensive dialogue and are more comfortable with structured learning materials. They excel in locating information, making decisions about when, where, and how to study, and determining the depth of their studies. On the other hand, students who are less confident or capable of learning management are likely to be drawn more to a learning engagement with less structure and more dialogue. In these learning experiences, students benefit from increased information and support by engaging in continuous dialogue with their educators and accessing instructional materials tailored to their unique requirements, preferred learning styles, and individual learning pace (Moore, 2018). As the transactional distance increases, there is a greater need and opportunity for students to exercise autonomy (Moore, 2018).

There are no quick fixes or ready-made answers, but looking for answers will lead to making more informed decisions for learning engagements (Moore, 1991). The way instructions should be organised depends on factors such as the subject matter, the complexity of the instruction, the students' characteristics, and, most importantly, the degree of autonomy that students are able to exercise (Moore, 1991).

Investing time in comprehending students' needs, evaluating the content of the learning engagement, and defining the learning objectives, along with determining the type and frequency of student activities and assessments, is essential. The relationship between the educator and the students determines the structure and extent of the dialogue, which is sufficient for the students (Moore, 1991). Figure 3.10 visually represents the correlation between transactional distance and student autonomy. In this context, it is evident that as transactional distance grows, the demand for higher student autonomy also escalates (Moore, 2018). However, just as Akin (2014) noted in his early research, Moore (1973) indicates that distance could not be measured concerning time or length but more as a function of student autonomy and dialogue.

Figure 3.10

The connection between the facets of transactional distance and student autonomy (Moore, 2018, p. 37)



Communication is pivotal in diminishing the transactional distance between students and educators. Therefore, effective communication should serve as the bridge that closes this gap and facilitates the attainment of instructional objectives. Therefore, transactional distance is reduced by carefully selecting communication methods that increase dialogue (Attardi et al., 2018). Enhancing dialogue and diminishing transactional distance necessitates the implementation of an open communication platform that fosters academic interaction. Such interaction is vital for preserving student–educator relationships in the context of online instruction (Stone & Barry, 2019).

Student autonomy is contingent upon both dialogue and structure, the other two elements of transactional distance. In this context, students need the capability to govern and oversee their learning independently by formulating a study plan, locating resources that aid their studies, and self-assessing their progress (Foniadou et al., 2017). Therefore, an intricate interrelationship exists between dialogue, structure, and student autonomy. In Moore's (1997, 2018) investigations of learning engagements, he notes that the efficacy of different levels of structure or dialogue seems to interact with the degree to which students can engage in crafting and implementing their learning experiences. For this reason, Moore (2018) asserts that effectively handling transactional distance necessitates more than just designing the lesson's structure and skilfully orchestrating the dialogue during its delivery. It also entails understanding each student's capacity to navigate their involvement with the different aspects of these teaching methods. Therefore, different learning engagements always have more or less dialogue, structure, and more or less student autonomy, making transactional distance a variable, not a fixed quantity (Moore, 2012). When there is no dialogue or input from the students, it is also challenging to reorganise and improve the different elements of the learning engagement (Moore, 1997). Ultimately, the relationship between the educator and the students is high when a highly structured learning engagement has little or no dialogue (Moore, 1997). The learning engagement structure is the overarching factor determining the extent and nature of dialogue.

Lesser-Known Factors of the Theory of Transactional Distance

In addition to the three macro factors of transactional distance, Moore (1991, 1997, 2018), Moore and Kearsley (2012), and other researchers like Vrasidas and Mclsaac (1999), Lemone (2005), Larkin and Jamieson-Proctor (2013, 2015), and Larkin (2016) refer to numerous other factors that influence transactional distance, as summarised in Table 3.1. These factors were crucial determinants of the dialogue’s scope and character within the learning engagement. These lesser-known factors range from aspects of the subject to aspects related to the educator, the students, and other factors.

I found these elements in the corners of numerous articles after describing the three macro factors, either in isolation or combination. I must acknowledge that I use the words “lesser known” with caution since these factors receive extensive attention outside the research world of transactional distance.

Table 3.1

The lesser-known factors that influence transactional distance

Subject	Educator	Students	Other
The subject of the learning engagement	Personality	Personality	Environmental factors (link with the medium of communication)
Academic level	Interpersonal communication skills	Ability to manage their side of the dialogic process	Constraints imposed by the educational institution
Medium of communication	Educational philosophy for designing learning engagements	Learning styles	Class size
	Emotional characteristics	Number of students that the educator is “in charge” of	
	Feedback	Prior experience	
	Social, psychological, and philosophical characteristics		
	Cultural (cultural influences) and language differences between the educator and the students		

Note. This table is based on the work of Lemone (2005), Moore (1991, 1997, 2018), Moore and Kearsley (2012), and Vrasidas and Mclsaac (1999).

Although each of these lesser-known factors that influence transactional distance is worthy of prior and further research, I have selected the subject of History, and consequently

historical distance, as another theoretical lens in this study due to the distances I have experienced in this field throughout my life and my need to understand historical distance. Although the lesser-known aspects of transactional distance influence the quality and depth of dialogue in a learning scenario, they can also play a crucial role in shaping the framework of learning engagement and fostering student independence.

Literature Review on Transactional Distance

I start this section by deliberately exploring the literature that also explores and supports the notion of transactional distance in traditional classrooms with face-to-face learning engagements.

Transactional Distance in All Learning Environments

In 1986, Rumble posited that transactional distance is not limited only to distance learning but is a pivotal concept that permeates all educational environments and significantly impacts the learning journey (Swain, 2002, cited in Karaoglan-Yilmaz et al., 2022). Moreover, transactional distance and the imperative for interaction are relevant across all educational settings and are not confined to distance learning (Swain, 1996). In 2006, Moore noted that this was not surprising since the concepts of transactional distance stemmed from mainstream education psychologies and philosophies (Bernath & Vidal, 2007). For example, autonomy came from Rogers (1969) and Maslow (1968), who were essentially psychotherapists and university lecturers but were not trained in education.

The term “transaction” came from Dewey, who focused on how students learned in classrooms. It is beneficial to revisit Dewey’s insights on transactions. Dewey (1938) highlighted that interactions occur between individuals, objects, and other people, and the notion of the situation and the interactions are inherently intertwined. An experience is shaped by the ongoing interaction between an individual and their immediate environment, which could involve conversations with others about a particular subject or event, with that subject also being a part of the overall context.

As a result, although transactional distance is predominantly associated with distance education, it is crucial to recognise its presence in all educational interactions and dynamics, including traditional face-to-face settings. In this context, distance is relative, not absolute (Bernath & Vidal, 2007; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2018). In addition, Saba and Shearer (2018) posit that instructional effectiveness is not determined by the physical setting but rather by the depth of interaction between students and educators. This perspective has significant implications for distance learning programmes and conventional educational settings.

Conventional education can, in turn, draw from the theory of practice of distance education (Moore, 1997). This is evident in the research conducted by Swain (1996), who explored the inclusion of transactional distance factors in her traditional (face-to-face) classroom and found that the gradual integration of distance education strategies into her traditional courses increased their effectiveness. Swain's (1996) research underscores this point. By incorporating elements of transactional distance into her conventional face-to-face classes, she observed an enhancement in the effectiveness of these courses, suggesting that distance education strategies could have positive effects even in traditional settings. Consequently, educators across all levels should strategise on ways to offer adequate dialogue and structure to enhance achievement in each learning objective. This means creating the best conditions and opportunities for student interactions, including those with the content, fellow students, instructors, and various media platforms (Swain, 1996). For Swain (1996), the idea of transaction underscores the interaction between the learning setting, participants, and the behavioural dynamics present. Therefore, transactional distance emerges when there is an educator, a student, and a communication medium in play (Swain, 1996).

While transactional distance can be relevant to conventional face-to-face education, it is more pronounced in distance education. This is mainly due to unique factors such as differing teaching methods, physical separation, and the specific challenges associated with remote learning (Sevnarayan, 2022). Transactional distance in distance education can lead to challenges such as heightened feelings of isolation, diminished motivation, and an increased

likelihood of students withdrawing from courses (Lowe, 2000; Moore, 1993, 1997; Swart & MacLeod, 2021, as cited in Sevnarayan, 2022). Consequently, when considering transactional distance, distance learning as an educational learning engagement differs from contiguous learning engagements except for the physical separation of students and educators (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). The separation of educator and students is unique in distance education and requires specialised teaching and learning strategies and techniques, leading to the recognition of distance education with notable characteristics (Moore, 1997).

Although the theory of transactional distance developed over several years, very few empirical studies have been conducted to test the validity of its macro factors and their relationship (Delgaty, 2018; Falloon, 2011; Giossos et al., 2009; Gorsky & Caspi, 2005). Delgaty (2018) further determined that employing qualitative approaches to measure transactional distance, such as observations and interviews, could give educators a deeper understanding of these phenomena.

Therefore, Moore's attempts to empirically confirm the theory of transactional distance did not meet with consensus (Giossos et al., 2009). Giossos et al. (2009) and Bornt (2011) highlight that the three clusters of variables (dialogue, structure, and autonomy) are not consistently predictive. Efforts to establish a consistent relationship between transactional distance and structure variables have not yielded definitive results. Thus, Giossos et al. (2009) propose that individuals operate within an open system that is inherently unpredictable and cannot be fully controlled. What still counts is that the variables provide a metric for understanding how transactional distance arises and which proactive steps practitioners can take to reduce the distance. It does not matter that the variables do not precisely predict the transactional distance (Bornt, 2011). Moore's theory is, then, an excellent working model for understanding distance education.

Interestingly, multiple studies have recommended incorporating interviews or observational data in future research on the theory of transactional distance, an approach that this study has adopted (Bischoff et al., 1996; Chen & Willits, 1998; Kanuka et al., 2002). For Giossos et al. (2009), the theory of transactional distance was too valuable to discard despite

the complete lack of empirical verification. Furthermore, existing literature has gaps in the exploration of students' and faculty's experiences and perspectives as they navigate and communicate within ever-evolving online learning environments (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, as cited in Waite, 2016). Furthermore, Falloon (2011) states that while Moore's theory offers a valuable perspective for examining online education, there may be a need to re-evaluate some of its principles. Nonetheless, transactional distance theory remains pivotal in distance learning, serving as a robust model for deciphering the nuances of remote education (Giossos et al., 2009).

Fortunately, as Moore (1997) points out, variables other than teaching and learning exist in the environment, individuals, and behaviour patterns. Therefore, there is an opportunity for more than one molecular theory within a more molar theory framework. It is also possible that other variables might emerge during the data construction process. Therefore, it is necessary to unpack the variables. For example, the variables influencing transactional distance provide a framework to explore and understand transactional distance in history education.

Waite (2016) notes the importance of recognising and addressing the transactional gap in the online classroom to optimise student outcomes and increase retention by using effective strategies. Students' persistence in online education is closely linked to the capacity of both students and faculty to establish connections, share information, and engage within a transactional realm. In the digital learning environment, participants can be separated by geography, technology, and demographics, leading to increased interpersonal challenges that can adversely impact student retention. A more in-depth insight into the transactional distance from the perspective of both students and educators can enhance academic knowledge and practical approaches to factors that affect student persistence in online courses (Demir Kaymak & Horzum, 2013; Waite, 2016). A more profound comprehension of the gap and the impact of transactional distance on online learning is essential. Without this knowledge, educators and students face challenges bridging this distance (Demir Kaymak & Horzum, 2013; Waite, 2016).

Initial Research on Moore's Theory of Transactional Distance

Our understanding of transactional distance was limited a few years back, necessitating more in-depth research (Moore, 1991). The systematic study of Moore's transactional distance theory only began in earnest during the mid-1990s (Barbour & Reeves, 2006). For this reason, it is thought-provoking that some research after 1991 critiqued Moore's theory of transactional distance (Delgaty, 2018; Falloon, 2011; Giossos et al., 2009; Gorsky & Caspi, 2005) instead of fulfilling the task of contributing to, developing, and improving the theory, especially considering the vast technological advances that have been made in the 21st century. According to Moore (2006, as cited in Bernath & Vidal, 2007), theory develops authority as people find it helpful and endorse it as valuable. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate and assess the empirical validity of Moore's theory of transactional distance (for example, Bischoff, 1993; Bischoff et al., 1996; Chen, 2001a, 2001b; Chen & Willits, 1998; Force, 2004; Saba & Shearer, 1994; Zhang, 2003). Even with varying outcomes, all these studies underscore the significance and applicability of transactional distance theory when examining distance education practices (Kassandrinou et al., 2014). Of these studies, I would like to highlight aspects that have emerged.

According to Moore (2018), Saba (1988) was the first significant researcher to recognise the potential of transactional distance and contribute significantly to developing transactional distance theory. Saba (1988, p. 17) contended that comprehensive telecommunications systems allowed educators to balance dialogue and structure levels. Thus, these systems might permit a greater variety of transactions, thereby improving interaction to reduce transactional distance (Mclsaac & Blocher, 1998). Later, Saba and Shearer (1994) further explored the idea of transactional distance using a different approach. They introduced system dynamics to explore the interplay between structure and dialogue concerning transactional distance. This model aimed to empirically validate the notions of transactional distance, structure, and dialogue in a tele-lesson scenario, where an educator engaged in one-on-one interactions with graduate students (Murphy & Rodrigues-

Manzanasres, 2008; Saba, 1988; Saba & Shearer, 1994). They found that “transactional distance varies by the rate of dialogue and structure” (Murphy & Rodrigues-Manzanasres, 2008, p. 54). The research pinpointed four distinct forms of interaction: direct, indirect, active, and passive communication methods. Saba and Shearer (1994) also added the variables of student and educator control (Murphy & Rodrigues-Manzanasres, 2008).

Additionally, Saba and Shearer (1994) found that as dialogue increased, structure decreased, leading to a reduction in transactional distance. Saba and Shearer (1994) observed that in a videoconferencing setting, as dialogue and student autonomy rose, there was a corresponding decrease in structure, leading to a reduction in transactional distance. Dron et al. (2004) also explored transactional distance within a blended learning context. Their findings highlighted the inverse correlation between structure and dialogue in this educational setting.

In the initial stages, numerous scales were formulated and employed to validate the existence of structure, dialogue, and transactional distance (Bischoff, 1993; Bischoff et al., 1996). Furthermore, they highlighted vital components for creating and validating a reliable rating scale about transactional distance (Kassandrinou et al., 2014; Zhang, 2003). Bischoff et al. (1996) measured structure, dialogue, and transactional distance elements within distance education courses offered via interactive television and traditional in-person sessions. Factors like frequency of student–educator communication, seating configurations, and class size were used to gauge dialogue. Bischoff et al. (1996, as cited in Murphy & Rodrigues-Manzanasres, 2008) determined that a deeper exploration of various facets of dialogue was essential. Specifically, they suggested examining how structure affects groups based on their expertise, such as novice versus seasoned students, and assessing the influences at diverse dialogue intensities.

There were several shortcomings in the Saba and Shearer study (Chen, 2001a). First, the tools they employed were derived from classroom interaction analysis, which might have constrained its scope. Their reliance on Flanders’ interaction analysis system possibly led them to give more attention to educators than students (Amidon & Flanders, 1967, as cited in

Chen, 2001a). Additionally, the study by Saba and Shearer (Chen, 2001a) was confined to interactions via desktop videoconferencing where only individual participants engaged with the educator. This setup overlooked the group dynamics that modern telecommunication technologies could support and promote.

Several studies have focused on perceived transactional distance rather than its actual manifestation. For instance, Bischoff (1993) undertook what she claimed to be the pioneering effort to delve into the theory of transactional distance. She collected data from 221 student volunteers across 13 Public Health and Nursing graduate courses at the University of Hawaii. The study aimed to understand students' perceptions of transactional distance in conventional in-person classes and distance-based courses facilitated by Hawaii Interactive Television Service. This platform offers two-way audio and full-motion video capabilities managed by Hawaii Public Television. The feedback revealed varying degrees of perceived transactional distance among respondents. However, Bischoff noted the limitations of her assessment tool. This self-developed questionnaire gauged transactional distance using merely two questions which focused on the perceived proximity between educators and students and within the student group. She suggested improvements to her tool for upcoming research, emphasising the necessity to enrich the growing academic discourse on this topic (Chen, 2001a). Therefore, Bischoff (1993) and Bischoff et al. (1996) examined postgraduate students' perceptions regarding transactional distance, dialogue, and structure in distance education courses delivered through interactive television.

In addition, Chen (2001a, 2001b) explored the impact of various interactions between the students, between educator and student, between student and content, and between student and interface in online learning settings. According to Kassandrinou et al. (2014, p. 2001), instead of directly referring to transactional distance, Chen emphasised its experiential nature, coining it as "perceived transactional distance". Zhang (2003, as cited in Kassandrinou et al., 2014) further argued that students' perception of this distance and their involvement in learning was predominantly influenced not by the gap between students and educators but by the perceived distance between the students themselves.

Barbour and Reeves (2006) acknowledged that various studies validated the significance of the three factors (dialogue, structure, and student autonomy) in predicting students' perceived distance in distance education contexts. However, they also raised concerns regarding the completeness and exhaustive nature of the theory. Unfortunately, the research did not secure the theory in the current education climate and technologically advanced 21st century. Recently, Moore's theory of transactional distance has come under increased scrutiny and has faced more comprehensive criticisms (Barbour & Reeves, 2006).

Among the earlier studies that concentrated on perceived transactional distance, Stein et al. (2005) aimed to investigate alterations in satisfaction related to perceived knowledge acquisition. They examined this concerning student contentment with course organisation, student satisfaction with interactions, and technical competence across various distance learning settings. Shea et al. (2003) and Stein et al. (2005) also highlighted the importance of course design for student satisfaction in online learning settings. This study reinforces these findings, emphasising two main points for educators. First, educators need to recognise and meet the structural needs of students and tailor their interactions accordingly. Secondly, while student-initiated interactions are valuable, they might not be as influential in determining overall learning satisfaction. The findings of Stein et al. (2005) also highlighted the importance of students communicating their needs so that educators can adjust the course structure to align with their expectations.

Chen and Willits (1998) studied the role of in-class discussions in a videoconferencing setting. They observed that such dialogue directly enhanced learning outcomes and bridged the gap between educators and students. Furthermore, they found that as transactional distance decreased, learning outcomes improved. A year later, Chen and Willits (1999) delved into the elements that shape dialogue, structure, and student autonomy, examining them from the students' viewpoint within the framework of university courses delivered via videoconferencing. The course's structure was bifurcated into two aspects: organisation and delivery.

Meanwhile, student autonomy was characterised by two features: independence and interdependence. The researchers determined that the correlation between dialogue and transactional distance could differ based on the dialogue form (such as discussions within the class, face-to-face interactions outside the class, or electronic interactions outside the class). Among these, the regularity of in-class dialogue significantly impacted students' perceptions of their learning results. Chen and Willits (1999, as cited in Murphy & Rodrigues-Manzanasres, 2008) highlighted the importance of exploring the circumstances that foster various types of dialogue. They emphasised the need to delve into the connection between the strictness or adaptability of a course and its dialogue, as well as to determine whether the necessities of interdependency could be addressed within a videoconferencing environment.

In a graduate course where students engaged both in-person and online, Vrasidas and Mclsaac's research (1999) discovered that components of structure, such as mandatory activities, enhanced interactions and bolstered dialogue between the participants. Contrasting Moore's initial conception of transactional distance, where only educator–student interactions could impact dialogue and transactional distance, Vrasidas and Mclsaac (1999) proposed that the surge in student-to-student interactions enabled by emerging technologies could also play a role in influencing transactional distance (Vrasidas & Mclsaac, 1999, as cited in Murphy & Rodrigues-Manzanasres, 2008). In addition, Vrasidas and Mclsaac (1999) determined that interaction was influenced by the course structure and factors such as class size, feedback, and previous experience with computer-mediated communication. Where Vrasidas and Mclsaac (1999) highlighted these factors, interaction and transactional distance were influenced. After researching the online learning experiences of students from Nepal and Iceland, Lemone (2005) deduced that cultural factors could also considerably impact transactional issues.

Vandergriff's (2002) case study focusing on an asynchronous university course broadened the dialogue parameters to incorporate the concept of shared meaning-making. A significant spotlight was cast on community dialogue, which he interpreted as the involvement of an interpretive community actively participating in the co-creation of meaning. This redefines

dialogue from educator–student instruction to a collective conversation within an interpretive community (Vandergrift, 2002). In addition, Vandergrift (2002) elaborated on the educator’s intentionally restrained educator presence to promote student ownership of the online course and decrease the transactional distance. Vandergrift (2002) further differentiated between course structure and infrastructure. He defined infrastructure as encompassing everything in Moore’s definition of structure, along with an extensive collection of additional content and contextual information crafted to assist individual students in navigating their unique learning journeys. Vandergrift (2002) underscored the concepts of shared meaning-making, community dialogue, and subdued presence. These notions are closely aligned with the findings presented by Sevnarayan (2022).

Zhang (2003) enriched the theory of transactional distance by incorporating more intricate and multi-dimensional factors. She described transactional distance as encompassing the physical, cognitive, social, psychological, and behavioural gaps between educators and students. The theory of transactional distance is broadly accepted in online education research and serves as a guiding framework for scrutinising interactions within online educational settings. Soon after, Offir et al. (2004) analysed interactions in a learning setting that used videoconferencing. They aimed to pinpoint educators’ adaptive methods to lessen transactional distance in remote and in-person learning environments. Their findings reinforced the link between efficient communication patterns among educators and the decrease in transactional distance. This emphasises that educators can detect and address the potential adverse effects of transactional distance.

Gorsky and Caspi (2005) summarised the various relations within each set of factors and between the three sets of transactional distance factors. They further underscored three rationales detailing the practical significance of the theory of transactional distance (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005). To begin with, the theory serves as a crucial analytical framework for comprehending distance education systems. Theories like transactional distance play an indispensable role in navigating the intricate practice of a logical endeavour like distance learning (Garrison, 2000). Therefore, it is a valuable conceptual framework for defining and

understanding distance education as a research hypothesis. Secondly, the theory is valid due to the need to reduce the transactional distance (Jung, 2001). Additionally, the theory of transactional distance is presumed valid and imparted to students at higher education institutions. Finally, there is enormous variation in the strategies and techniques used in the various learning engagements globally since the space between an educator and a student is never the same (Moore, 1997).

Dron (2006, 2007a, 2007b) presented innovative perspectives on transactional distance and e-learning, examining the interplay of structure and dialogue in transactional control. Furthermore, he delved into control aspects linked to social software and considered that structure might emerge due to dialogue. In conclusion, there is a link between transactional control and the educator's and students' choices.

Despite Moore's statement (Moore, 2006, as cited in Bernath & Vidal, 2007) that the theory developed authority because people found it helpful and endorsed it as valuable, some critiques are found in the research. For example, Gorsky and Caspi (2005) queried whether transactional distance theory was a valid scientific theory. They, therefore, examined six empirical studies that aimed to verify the theory. The outcomes of these investigations either partially supported the theory or, in cases where the studies did seem to support the theory, there were concerns about reliability and construct validity (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005, pp. 1 & 9). In 2004, Force undertook quantitative research exploring perceived transactional distance, autonomy, structure, and dialogue between students involved in learning activities rooted in asynchronous computer-mediated communication settings. Unfortunately, the results from the factor analysis, when applied to the data concerning autonomy, did not validate Moore's theory (Kassandrinou et al., 2014). Then, according to Barbour and Reeves (2006), Jung (2001) suggested that studies investigating Moore's theory of transactional distance had yielded varied and sometimes conflicting outcomes. Stein (2004, p. 1) supported this criticism, stating that

contrary to theories of transactional analysis that state that low structure, the ability to negotiate with the instructor, and the autonomy that online learning offers are valued

at a premium ... that structure was the most important factor in online student satisfaction and community formation.

Jung's (2001) critique was further supported by Lowell (2004), who found that while dialogue played a role in transactional distance, Moore's structure factor did not (Barbour & Reeves, 2006). Lowell (2004) also found that social presence was responsible for the most significant variable in transactional distance. Jung's (2001) critique gained additional backing from Lowell's (2004) findings. Lowell observed that dialogue influenced transactional distance, but Moore's structural element did not have the same effect (Barbour & Reeves, 2006). Furthermore, Lowell's research (2004) research determined that social presence was the most influential variable in shaping transactional distance.

Research on Transactional Distance After 2006

Falloon (2011) states that while Moore's theory offers a valuable perspective for examining online learning, its core principles might warrant a re-evaluation. Nevertheless, for Falloon (2011), the theory of transactional distance continues to hold a prominent place in distance education. For Giossos et al. (2009), however, Moore's efforts to empirically validate the theory of transactional distance do not achieve unanimous agreement. The inconsistency in demonstrating a stable relationship between transactional distance and structural variables means that no definitive conclusions can be drawn (Giossos et al., 2009) because individuals operate within an open system beyond control. Giossos et al. (2009) note that a review of the research on the theory of transactional distance unveiled a range of operational definitions, highlighting a lack of uniform agreement. While a phenomenon can be understood or elucidated, it does not inherently imply predictability, as the intricacy of the associated structures renders forecasting unattainable (Giossos et al., 2009). What counts is that "the variables provide a metric for understanding how transactional distance occurs and which proactive steps can be taken to reduce the distance" (Bornt, 2011, p. 1). Hence, the theory of transactional distance continues to play a pivotal role in distance education, as it provides an effective model for comprehending the dynamics of distance learning (Giossos et al., 2009).

However, given that Moore's theory stands as a cornerstone in distance education, persisting in its exploration and affirming its theoretical underpinnings remains of great value.

A few research articles guided me to look past the usual factors (structure, dialogue and autonomy) of transactional distance in history education. What was noteworthy was the influence of the subject itself on transactional distance, especially in the training of pre-service educators. The ongoing research by Larkin and Jamieson-Proctor (2013, 2015) and Larkin (2016) on enhancing knowledge and reducing anxiety in an online mathematics education course for pre-service educators was fascinating. This research stood out because of the research question of the first article regarding the problem of the decrease in students studying a mathematics course online (Larkin & Jamieson-Proctor, 2013); this resonated with me. The researchers inquired how an online mathematics methods course could be structured to reduce the transactional distance among the educator, student, and peers. The goal was to ensure that pre-service educators cultivated the right attitudes and skills necessary for teaching mathematics. The 2013 article presented the theory of transactional distance as a guiding conceptual structure for the creation and delivery of a fully online first-year mathematics education methods course aimed at pre-service educators (Larkin & Jamieson-Proctor, 2013). The study pinpointed key challenges present in the mathematics literature, both in terms of general mathematics education and the mathematical training of pre-service educators. Ultimately, the course goals were realised by employing a recurring cycle of data gathering and introspection, followed by course modifications and the execution of those design alterations.

Larkin and Jamieson-Proctor (2015) conducted a qualitative study that delved into the pedagogical modifications to a hybrid and online mathematics education course for pre-service educators over three years. The theory of transactional distance served as the foundational conceptual and theoretical blueprint for this course transformation (Huang & Manouchehri, 2019; Mungai, 2021; Okkers, 2020). It mainly focused on the transactional distance between pre-service education students and educators, the attitudes of the students toward mathematics per se, and students' development of mathematical pedagogical

knowledge (Mungai, 2021). The revamped approach enhanced the engagement of pre-service educators with mathematics, bolstered their confidence in teaching the subject, and enriched both their mathematics content knowledge and mathematical pedagogical knowledge. Their research suggested that if educators employ technologies judiciously, they can achieve high levels of both structure and dialogue (Mungai, 2021; Okkers, 2015, as cited in Huang & Manouchehri, 2019; Okkers, 2020). Larkin and Jamieson-Proctor (2015) indicated that online distance learning might not inherently capture the mutual relationship between structure and dialogue. Instead, their students had more autonomy when more structure and dialogue were provided (Huang & Manouchehri, 2019). Ultimately, there was a shift in perspective regarding mathematics education for pre-service educators. As a direct consequence of their research into the redesign of a Mathematics Education course, Larkin and Jamieson-Proctor (2015) viewed transactional distance theory as a practical exploratory framework for educators for the delivery of courses online since high levels of dialogue and high structure increased the students' general attitude towards the subject of mathematics and content knowledge (Okkers, 2020).

Larkin (2016) continued to use transactional distance theory in a design–experiment approach as a conceptual framework to underpin a course redesign for the Mathematics Education course for pre-service educators and driven by critical drivers, including the author's beliefs on effective education and the opportunity to utilise his experience of online learning. The university's online course was not yet pedagogically adequate, with a lack of involvement, communication, and cooperation between lecturers and students and the effective use of resources. Therefore, Larkin broke away from action research and used design-based research with three action research cycles from which he collected quantitative and qualitative data (formal student evaluation) to redesign a course. In the given scenario, the course redesign was influenced by two primary factors. First, his convictions about effective mathematics education and the necessity to emphasise mathematics pedagogy in educational delivery. Secondly, the chance to leverage his vast expertise in online education to explore the benefits of a blended approach in mathematics education, especially in a setting where

the university prioritised blended learning. Consequently, the focus was on elements linked to a component of the theory of transactional distance of online learning, such as online lectures, video demonstrations, portfolios, virtual classrooms, and forums.

In recent years, we have found an increase in various qualitative studies, including in African countries. Tunjera (2014) completed a qualitative case study on enhancing dialogue to reduce the transactional distance for six pre-service science educators who studied remotely in Zimbabwe. Tunjera used mobile-mediated social media in a virtual group activity. In his 2017 mixed-method research study, Olaniran (2017) investigated the training of pre-service educators, specifically those in the Bachelor of Education and Post Graduate Certificate in Education programmes at open and distance learning institutions in South Africa and Nigeria. This study underpinned various theoretical frameworks, including self-determination, humanism, transformational learning, distributed learning, and transactional distance.

The identified challenges were vast: awareness issues, teaching practice placements, anxiety, funding, access, computer skills, and support. A communication gap created by a weak support system was also a challenge. Unfortunately, there are no references to subject-specific challenges. Finally, a study by Dampson et al. (2019) used a mixed-method approach to determine the extent to which distance education pre-service educators' needs were met at a university in Ghana.

The rise in COVID-19 cases made online learning indispensable, compelling educators and students to adjust to this unforeseen norm (Sevnarayan, 2022). However, to ensure the success of online learning, educators needed to forge spaces and chances for student engagement. By fostering dialogue, promoting social interactions, and offering well-structured learning resources and activities, they could diminish the transactional distance within a subject (Moore, 1993; Swart & MacLeod, 2021, as cited in Sevnarayan, 2022; Zhang, 2003;). At the heart of transactional distance, as emphasised in Sevnarayan's paper (2022), lies the concept of dialogue. This has been broadened to encompass four categories: interaction between educator and student, between students, between student and content, and a

vicarious interaction observed by students, among others (Zhang, 2003). The concept of student-to-student interaction, facilitated by modern technologies and underscored in the study by Vrasidas and Mclsaac (1999), is a facet of the overarching learning community construct associated with transactional distance (Sevnarayan, 2022).

The 2022 study by Sevnarayan offers a distinct perspective on how the theory of transactional distance can be understood beyond just the post-secondary level. According to Sevnarayan (2022), Moore (1993) contended that an elevated structure restricts the module's ability to cater to the student's needs and inclinations, amplifying transactional distance. Conversely, Huang et al. (2016, as cited in Sevnarayan, 2022) noted that some researchers have discovered that a high structure can boost student dialogue and reduce transactional distance. Asynchronous tools like discussion forums, podcasts, PowerPoint slides, videos, and more offer students extra time to organise their learning, delve into module content (McClure & Williams, 2021, as cited in Sevnarayan, 2022), and interact with both the materials and their peers. Such interactions can be particularly potent in amplifying dialogue, subsequently reducing transactional distance. Educators have numerous avenues to foster engagement and enhance student dialogue through interactive opportunities (Sevnarayan, 2022). Discussion boards and social media platforms foster educator-to-student and student-to-student interactions, decreasing transactional distance.

Similarly, such platforms encourage dialogue between students and between students and educators, which is linked to minimised transactional distance (Sevnarayan, 2022). According to Sevnarayan (2022), incorporating a variety of interaction modes, such as integrating various online learning technologies, can aid educators in diminishing transactional distance. As such, educators must possess the necessary pedagogical skills to engage meaningfully with students, enhancing dialogue and influencing teaching and learning outcomes.

Conversely, as structure increases, dialogue decreases, requiring the student to exhibit greater autonomy and resulting in more considerable transactional distance (Delgaty, 2018; Rhode, 2009, as cited in Sevnarayan, 2022). Furthermore, Sevnarayan (2022)

endeavoured to methodically connect their ideas and constructs with those of Moore's theory of transactional distance, encompassing its propositions, determinants, and hypotheses. Their results notably align with Saba and Shearer (1994), who focused on variables controlling both student and educator and with Chen and Willits's (1999) concepts of independence and interdependence.

Autoethnography in Transactional Distance

Among the studies that focus on transactional distance or aspects thereof, very few relate to autoethnography or narrative inquiry. For example, an Australian educator reflected on and recollected important events and insights while participating in a professional development project (Duarte, 2007), and Van Rooyen (2015) used a personal narrative in a South African case study using mobile phones in an accounting module. To comprehend accounting students' retention and throughput rates in an open learning setting, they used both didactic conversation theories and the theory of transactional distance. Finally, Lee (2019) used autoethnography interviews to report the teaching stories of eight distance educators (four from Canada and four from South Korea) at two open universities. The study focused on the participants' feelings and perceptions regarding the changes in their teaching practice. As a result, I identified a void in the application of autoethnography concerning the theory of transactional distance.

Conclusion to Going Down – Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room

This chapter, *Going Down: Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room*, focused on the first part of the theoretical and conceptual framework, the theory of transactional distance, and a literature review on prior and further research in this field. Since I assimilated the theory of transactional distance into my exploration of history education during my lived experience and how it came to be, I first focused on some views on theory and how it is used; then, I explained what a theoretical framework is and why it is needed. As one of two foci, I further focused on the transactional distances I experienced and how it

affected the distance I experienced in history education throughout my life as a child, a student, and an educator. I also explored and described the macro and lesser-known factors influencing transactional distance.

In the next room, I focus on the second theory forming the foundation of this autoethnography, that is, the theory of historical distance. In *Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room*, I discuss the development of various approaches, dimensions, and implications of historical distance in history education. In the second focus, historical distance, I also review the primary literature on historical distance in history education to highlight the research done in this field and eventually support some of the research gaps I am filling in this study.

CHAPTER 4: GOING DOWN – HISTORICAL DISTANCE THEORY AND THE READING ROOM

Introduction to Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room

I begin this chapter, *Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room* (see Figure 4.1), by discussing historical distance, the development of various approaches and dimensions, and the implications of historical distance. Next, I explore the second chosen theoretical and conceptual framework, the theory of historical distance. Similar to the previous room, I also focus on a literature review. Consequently, *Going Down: Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room* provides another lens through which I crafted my autoethnography and analysed my constructed data, as exhibited in my cabinets of curiosities.

Figure 4.1

Entering the Fourth Room, Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room



Conceptualising the Theory of Historical Distance

When exploring my lived experience of transactional distance in history education, it is essential to delve into the subject of history itself, examine the conceptualisation of historical distance, and consider the implications of historical distance in history education.

Historians have traditionally emphasised that “the past is a foreign country”, a phrase introduced by Lowenthal (1985). This expression was employed to distinguish the perspective of academia from that of journalism, to differentiate archival research from memoir or personal recollections, and to separate the seminar setting from acts of commemoration or re-enactment (Phillips, 2013). Grever et al. (2012) state that understanding the past’s fundamental foreignness is a prerequisite for actively practising historical thinking. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the past is irretrievable and can never be relived. Historians have long regarded distance and perspective as indispensable prerequisites for historical interpretation. Consequently, history is shaped by a historian’s endeavours to comprehend the past (Thorp & Persson, 2020).

Ordinarily, distance conveys the idea of disconnection or space between entities. It denotes the gap between two locations, A and B, or between the initial position and the final destination. In simpler terms, distance is commonly characterised in direct contrast to closeness or proximity (Phillips, 2004). Hence, at first glance, historical distance seems to be a straightforward concept, describing the time between the present, when historians conduct and write their research and the past they are examining (Den Hollander et al., as cited in De Bruijn, 2014). Nevertheless, this notion proves too rigid when applied to the study of historical distance, as, in this context, distance encompasses the entire spectrum from closeness to separation.

By contrast, distantiation refers to whatever puts things at a distance (Phillips, 2004). While chronological distance serves as the initial factor in historical distance, the actual distance can be reduced or increased in ways that can significantly reshape our interpretation of the historical significance of an event (Phillips, 2004). We can expect new vantage points

as time passes, resulting in more transparency or a more precise picture (Phillips, 2004). The time gap between the contemporary historian (or educator or student) and the pivotal events plays a pivotal role in shaping their potential comprehension of those events. Highlighting the variety of historical eras and the fundamental distinctions between historical circumstances can evoke a sense of historical detachment or distance (Wilschut, 2019).

In this context of distancing, temporality encompasses various elements, such as the proximity or remoteness of the past, the duality of time (which consists of measurable, objective time and personal, subjective time), and the diverse ways in which we view the past from a temporal standpoint (both in terms of its historical development and its simultaneous aspects) (Grever et al., 2012). Temporal distance represents a fundamental aspect of historical research. However, in practical terms, historical distance is always a construct that undergoes substantial mediation (Phillips, 2004). For instance, we frequently discuss the distance in the past as if its temporal meanings were inherently evident. However, a shared experience teaches us that temporality is influenced by other forms of distance (Phillips, 2015).

The arrangement of temporality does not solely shape historical distance; it also encompasses the arrangement of engagement, which can manifest at the levels of emotional connection, moral dedication, or ideological alignment (De Bruijn, 2014; Grever et al., 2012). However, there is “a clear analytical distinction between the construction of temporal distance between the past and the present and the level of engagement” (De Bruijn, 2014, p. 33). This configuration produces various distancing effects, but the formation of “temporality and engagement often goes hand in hand with, for instance, experience-based exhibits that aim to bring the past closer while also attempting to trigger an emotional or moral response” (De Bruijn, 2014, p. 33). Within this distancing effect, engagement pertains to moral dedication, level of emotional attachment, and sense of identification with the past.

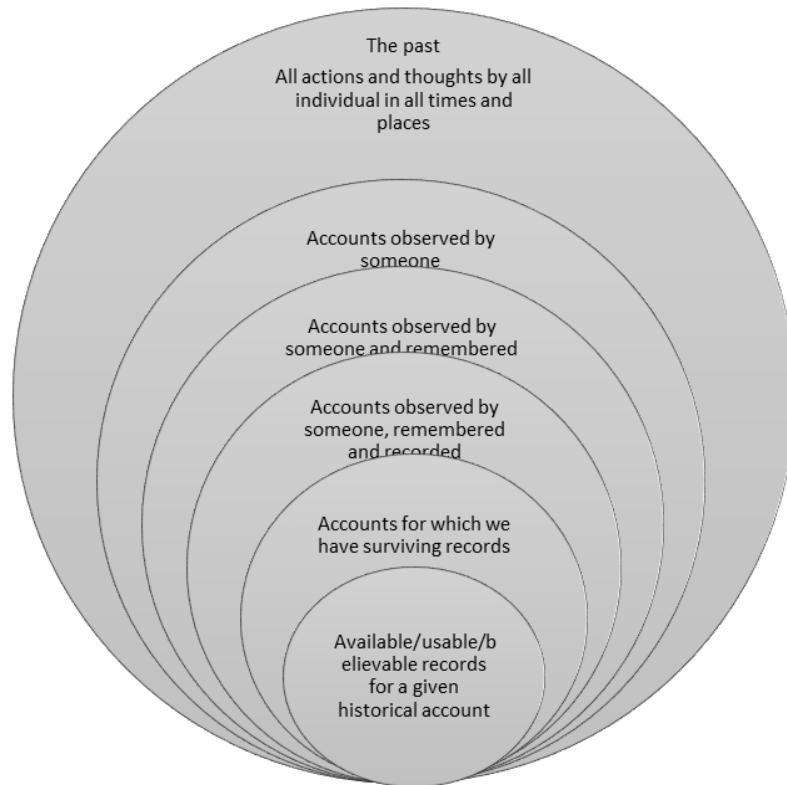
As a result, temporality represents just one dimension of distance, influenced by various dimensions of engagement that mirror our inclination to connect with the historical past (Phillips, 2015). Form, affect, ideology—summoning, and cognition—intelligibility are crucial mediations of that initial distance (Phillips, 2004). In Phillips’ later research in 2015, the

use of more accessible synonyms was introduced, encompassing activities like creating, experiencing, acting, and comprehending. It became apparent that distance needed to be redefined in the context of this broader range of engagements. These engagements serve as intermediaries that shape our connections to the past and encompass the entire range of distance positions between the past and the present (Den Hollander et al., 2011; Phillips, 2015). As time passes, the formal traits of historical accounts evolve under the influence of their emotional, ideological, and cognitive perspectives (Deza & Deza, 2006). These dimensions represent a sequence of variances (or effects of distance) that alter and reshape the temporal aspects of historical narratives. These dimensions or interventions influence every aspect of our interaction with the past and liberate historical distance from conventional linearity (Phillips, 2004, 2015). A third element to consider when discussing historical distance is the differentiation between the past being examined and the resultant historical narrative or outcome produced through that examination (Salevouris & Furay, 2015).

History comprises those facets of the past that are recognised as significant, documented, recorded, and passed on to subsequent generations (Adjepong, 2020). However, as indicated in Figure 4.2, only some records of the past still exist today, creating a specific account of the past. Next, a manufacturing process is followed between the past and the historical account, based on observation and what is observed and remembered. After that, what follows is observed, remembered, and recorded, and the records that still exist. Finally, we find only some records of historical accounts available, usable, and believable.

Figure 4.2

The process of transforming the past into a historical account (Fairbanks, 2021; Furay & Salevouris, 2000, p. 12)



For this reason, the historian can only reveal a tiny piece of the past. A historian can present an individual version of a past segment, but no one can present the past as it happened (Fairbanks, 2021). Hence, a considerable divide exists between what has transpired, the narratives constructed, and the tangible artefacts that remain.

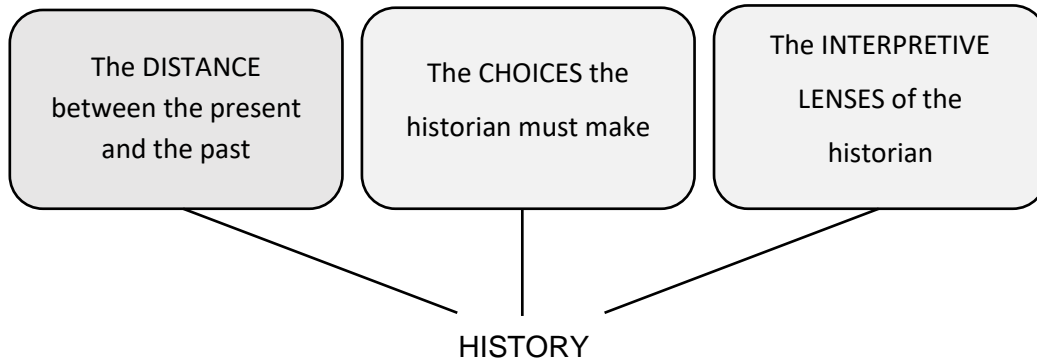
The past undergoes eight stages before it is presented by the historian as history (Fairbanks, 2021). At each stage, it becomes evident that a portion of the past becomes inaccessible or fades away (Furay & Salevouris, 2000, as cited in Fairbanks, 2021). Even within what is kept for future generations, there is no assurance that what survives encompasses the most comprehensive, representative, or long-lasting aspects of the past. In truth, a substantial portion of the past has disappeared and is beyond recovery (Adjepong, 2020). Only a tiny portion of what happened in the past is left. We can no longer solely

associate history with the past; instead, we must perceive history as an ongoing process encompassing the past, present, and future (Poulsen, 2001, as cited in Mazabow, 2003).

Seixas and Morton (2013, p. 1) describe history as “the stories we tell about the past”. This description highlights the primary dilemma in history: the connection between the historian and the historical subject they are researching. This challenge presents a threefold problem, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 below. According to Lévesque (2016), it mainly stems from critical factors: first, the time difference between the present (where the historian resides) and the past (which no longer exists); and secondly, the historian’s necessity to make decisions in order to bring order and significance to a vast and disorderly past. This challenge also encompasses the interpretive viewpoints that historians apply to their work based on their identity and background. Many of these challenges centre on the intricate relationship between the historian and the past they are investigating. The historian “is a temporal being immersed in time, investigating and writing at a particular historical point with particular lenses, questions and methods” (Seixas, 2017, p. 598). History is constructed through the resolution of these challenges. Historical understanding does not materialise solely from the historian’s imagination of the past, revealing itself as a preformed, coherent, and meaningful narrative awaiting discovery by the historian. For this reason, Stout (2019, p. 129) concludes that “imagination is the source of wonder, connection and desire”. History arises from “the tension between the historian’s creativity and the fragmentary traces of the past that anchor it” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2).

Figure 4.3

History is made when a historian finds solutions to three problems (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2)



Seixas and Morton (2013, p. 1) state that “a gap exists between the present we live in and the infinite, unorganised, and unknowable everything that ever happened. How we overcome that gap gives rise to history”. Although not a new or controversial concept, distance remains a steadfast component in the vocabulary of historians. It plays a crucial role as one of the fundamental principles of modern historical research methods (Phillips, 2013). Den Hollander et al. (2011) argue that the duty of a historian does not involve immersing themselves in the past or endeavouring to transport the past into the present. Instead, the challenge is how much distance to put between oneself and one’s past to remain psychologically feasible (Deza & Deza, 2006).

Conversely, the historian’s mission is to concentrate on closing the gap between the specific past they are researching and the historical narrative or outcome that results from their study (Salevouris & Furay, 2015). However, historians cannot study the past directly but must rely on the surviving records (Salevouris & Furay, 2015). According to Seixas (2008), the divide (or connection) between an extensive and unstructured past and the historian in the present gives rise to a series of fundamental questions that the historical discipline as a community has endeavoured to address. These inquiries encompass the following: How can we acquire knowledge about historical events? How can we represent knowledge about something that no longer exists, namely, the past? What is the relationship between present-

day individuals and those who lived in the past? How do our beliefs come into play when we encounter conflicting narratives of the same historical event? (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2).

Nevertheless, historians have generally concurred that the ability to examine the past retrospectively with self-awareness and detachment is at the core of their discipline. This capacity helps differentiate the modern historical practice from earlier eras' more loosely structured and literary writings (Phillips, 2013). Although the passage of time allows us to perceive events more clearly and comprehend their origins and repercussions, time alone is insufficient. The historian's role is to actively engage with the past, creating a conversational context in which the past and the present are transformed. Therefore, the prescriptive aspect of historical distance should be relinquished, and it should transform into a valuable instrument for critically exploring how history is represented (Phillips, 2015).

Distance is a given construction with many dimensions (Phillips, 2004). Phillips (2004, as cited by De Bruijn, 2014) asserts that historical representation unavoidably establishes a degree of historical distance, as it must place its audience closer to or further away from the events and experiences it depicts. Each representation of the past arranges the distance, making it seem closer or more distant (Phillips, 2004). Each perspective, in turn, shapes the sense of proximity or distance concerning a past event (Pedersen, 2015b). Consequently, according to Phillips (2004, as cited by De Bruijn, 2014), historical distance is built along a continuum that spans from closeness or immediacy to distance or detachment.

Every form of historical representation shares a common objective: to mediate the distance between the present and the past (Phillips, 2013). Hence, in any historical endeavour, it is essential to consider the four fundamental dimensions of representation of managing historical distance (Phillips, 2015). Phillips introduces these four interconnected yet distinct forms of distance by discussing the domains of creation, emotion, action, and comprehension as various ways of interacting with the past. They serve as an analytical framework for exploring the evolving methods of historical representation (Den Hollander et al., 2011; Phillips, 2015). As we delve into the past, we inevitably encounter a fundamental tension. This tension lies between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. Furthermore, we observe tensions

between the feelings of closeness and detachment regarding the subjects we aim to comprehend: their form, emotional impact, ideological underpinnings, and cognitive aspects.

First, the form, encompassing genres, media, and vocabularies, moulds the formal structures of historical representation (Phillips, 2015). Consequently, a historical representation's formal or linguistic attributes, such as language, artistic elements, and cinematic effects, can either enhance or diminish historical distance (Pedersen, 2015b). An author's choice of linguistic elements when crafting a historical narrative influences how closely or distantly the reader perceives the past. Therefore, it is vital to analyse the linguistic methods employed by historians and their effects on establishing historical distance. In historical narratives, the use of language and the surrounding context contribute to shaping historical distance. Creating a particular historical standpoint relies on the active mechanisms inherent within the text (Pedersen, 2015b; Zeleňák, 2011).

Secondly, the emotional undertones within a historical portrayal impact the historian's stance toward an event, either distancing them from it or drawing them nearer, depending on their emotional connection to the subject (Pedersen, 2015b). Consequently, an account can either offer or withhold emotional experiences (Phillips, 2015). Historians employ language and other formal techniques to heighten or diminish the temporal gap between a reader and a historical narrative or monument (Pedersen, 2015b). A text infused with emotion can either lessen the distance between the reader and the historical event, or the reader might be repelled by the depiction and increase the distance. A visit to a monument can have a similar effect, altering the proximity of past events. Thus, we are influenced by the temporal placement of a relic from the past or a historical narrative.

Thirdly, ideology plays a role in how history readers tend to gravitate towards texts or works that align with their political or ideological beliefs and expectations (Pedersen, 2015b; Phillips, 2004). The ideological dimension relates to the work's potential political or moral implications (Phillips, 2015). Conversely, historians' ideological standpoint influences how they establish the temporal distance from a past event (Pedersen, 2015b). Academic and popular histories are seldom entirely objective; they often carry ideological motivations, as

historical accounts frequently align with a particular viewpoint or perspective and, as a result, endorse a specific ideology. Whether political or ideological, endorsing a particular stance can either bring us closer to or distance us from the past. Lastly, cognition (intelligibility) pertains to the mode of understanding on which the comprehensibility of history depends (Phillips, 2015).

The gap between the historian and the past creates a divide between our interpretation and the object we endeavour to comprehend (Wansink, 2017). The subject of the study has vanished and is not empirically observable, leading historians to investigate the past and the surviving historical remnants. Consequently, historical knowledge is perpetually constructed and subjective, relying on individual interpretations across various moments and locations (Newall, 2009, as cited in Wansink, 2017). This is one of two essential difficulties concerning truth in history (Kosso, 2009). Kosso (2009) highlights a second challenge in historical research: historians examine individuals who are often driven by their intentions, possess unique quirks, belong to a different era, and frequently hail from a different cultural context, rendering them challenging to comprehend from our contemporary viewpoint.

Implications of Historical Distance on History Education

However, there are also other perspectives on historical distance – those of the child, the student, and the educator. A student's personal history often diverges from the official or conventional portrayals of the past, encompassing potent and alternative perspectives on the social realities that have shaped people's lives (Subbiah, 2016). As a result, individuals frequently experience tension between these unofficial renditions of the past, like the lived experience of particular communities and groups, and the official historical narratives taught in educational settings (Phillips, 1998; Subbiah, 2016). Thus, education students walk into a classroom with complex ideas, images, and beliefs about the past, which affect their views on school history (Subbiah, 2016). Like Subbiah (2016), who referred to her lived education experience through encounters with official and unofficial history, I am exploring transactional and historical distances within these contexts.

History and the history education intertwined with it have been companions throughout my life. Like Ebels-Hoving (2011), who wrote extensively about history as her companion in her life, I did not want to write personal memoirs. Nonetheless, I have employed my lived experiences as a filter, attempting to comprehend my past as a child, my time as a student, and my role as an educator – all captured in my cabinets of curiosities. Gradually, it became apparent what led to and inspired my study of history education, both formally and informally, officially and unofficially, and the influence that they have had on my life.

School history, where official history is the focus, was not the only primary method to teach me about the past. I also gained both official and unofficial historical knowledge and comprehension from a multitude of other sources, including narratives, media, museum exhibitions, family anecdotes, historical fiction, films, documentaries (like the one in which I portrayed Maria van Riebeeck), and public celebrations (Phillips, 1998, as cited in Subbiah, 2016). I learned about the past mainly through stories and visits to places with historical significance, each set within different social, local, and cultural contexts. According to Phillips (1998, as cited in Subbiah, 2016), unofficial histories may be central to creating individual and collective identities. These unofficial histories can possess the immediacy and potency to shape perceptions of the past and, as a result, impact transactional distance.

Students regularly encounter historical distance in their daily lives and acknowledge its presence, even if they cannot articulate their thoughts about it (Pedersen, 2015a). Historical distance is in a constant state of change within the classroom setting. Students' proximity to past events also constantly fluctuates (Pedersen, 2015a). Moreover, history educators teach students the concept of historical distance using various well-established methods (Pedersen, 2015a). At first, students might be introduced to the idea and with a series of learning engagements providing incremental assistance and direction, they would gradually develop a deeper understanding of historical distance and its importance within history (Pedersen, 2015a). However, the dimensions of historical distance have several implications for history education and related contexts, such as museums and exhibitions. Regrettably, while exceptional educators have taught history to certain students, others have not been as

fortunate. In general, the history curriculum in schools has often overlooked the meticulous examination of historians' methodologies and thought processes (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

Historical concepts are intrinsically tied to fostering historical thinking abilities, which is vital in developing historical literacy. Within this framework, historical literacy involves a profound exploration of historical events and phenomena achieved through active involvement with readily available historical texts (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). Put differently, historical literacy represents the skill to navigate and formulate interpretations and insights about the past by using diverse sources, such as documents and artefacts, as evidence (Nokes, 2010, as cited in Bennett, 2014).

According to Bennett (2014), historical literacy is one paradigm for preparing pre-service educators' subject-specific literacy practice in Social Sciences and History. Historical literacy can also be described as "what someone gains from studying school history" (Maposa & Wassermann, 2009, p. 45). In a classroom where historical literacy is seamlessly woven into the teaching, learning, and assessment processes, students actively engage as participants within a community of practice. In this context, students must engage with various primary and secondary historical sources to conclude past events. Maposa and Wassermann (2009) offer an overview of their perspective on the theoretical framework underpinning the concept of historical literacy (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.4). The table illustrates how historical literacy can be conceptualised as comprising dimensions or benchmarks, including sub-dimensions. Focusing on all the dimensions or benchmarks of historical literacy and encompassing the sub-dimensions collectively contributes to cultivating this subject-specific literacy. Exposure to the elements within such a framework aids students in contemplating how historians convert the past into history and actively participate in its construction (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

Table 4.1

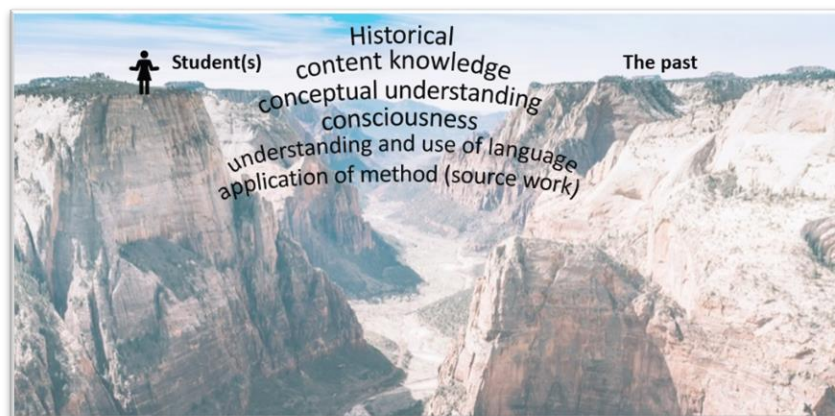
Summary of dimensions (benchmarks) and sub-dimensions of historical literacy

Dimensions (benchmarks) of historical literacy	Sub-dimension
Content knowledge	Events Narratives
Conceptual understanding	Time Causation and consequence Motivation Significance Moral judgements Change and continuity Empathy
Source work (historical method)	Sourcing Corroboration Contextualisation Analysis Evaluation Explanation
Historical consciousness	
Historical language	

Note. This conceptual framework is derived from Maposa and Wassermann (2009, p. 45).

Figure 4.4

The conceptual framework of Maposa and Wassermann (2009) as a bridge to cross historical distance



Van Drie and van Boxtel (2008) emphasise that learning history entails more than just acquiring factual knowledge about the past. Adjepong (2019, p. 22) briefly captured a contemporary definition of history as the discipline that involves studying, interpreting, and

attributing significance to important past human events and actions. This was accomplished through the application of a critical or historical scientific approach to gain insights into the present and cultivate a perspective for the future. However, different terms describe the aim and purpose of history education. As an illustration, Van Drie and Van Boxtel (2008) discovered that certain researchers link historical thinking and reasoning to historical consciousness or literacy. According to Perfetti et al. (1995, as cited in Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008), historical literacy encompasses acquiring knowledge about events, which can be thought of as a narrative, and effectively expressing reasoning. Grever and Adriaansen (2019) assert that most modern scholars use the competency approach when teaching history.

Consequently, various models and matrices containing educational components have been formulated within the competency framework. These components include understanding historical context, employing historical reasoning, engaging in historical thought processes, and comprehending first- and second-order concepts. Therefore, Grever and Adriaansen (2019) conceptualise historical consciousness by focusing on how individuals utilise the past and their methods of learning and interacting with historical knowledge.

Using primary and secondary sources is crucial when historians examine the different perspectives and accounts of historical events. This leads to understanding the past, its construction, and what makes history interpretative (Bennett, 2014). In addition, historical literacy is linked with fostering citizenship and the well-balanced training of citizens through the teaching of historical investigation (Bennett, 2014). VanSledright (2011, as cited in Bennett, 2014) concludes that teaching students the skill of historical investigation serves as a means to promote active citizenship. This fostering and training has been deemed the goal of history education. As a result, students are prepared to be informed citizens in the classroom as they become historically literate (Maposa & Wassermann, 2009, p. 45). This concept connects historical literacy with democratic education, in which students are viewed as engaged collaborators in their learning process. This approach underscores the importance of historical literacy in fostering personal development and encouraging active involvement in a democratic society (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, as cited in Lévesque, 2010).

Consequently, historical literacy involves learning historical events and using interpretative reasoning in classroom instruction. A historically literate person does not unquestioningly adopt another interpretation of history. A historically literate person is also a reflective thinker (Dewey, 1933, as cited in Bennett, 2014). An individual actively constructs knowledge by engaging in thoughtful and substantial contemplation of the past, using evidence from various sources to formulate a personal comprehension of historical events.

Different terms, seen as models, describe the aim and purpose of history education and provide competency frameworks to address historical distance (Grever & Adriaansen, 2019; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008). History educators must understand that their role is to “stimulate and direct student curiosity” instead of traditional lecturing (Thornton, 2005, p. 84, as cited in Bennett, 2014). According to Maposa and Wassermann (2009, p. 41), one of the lasting questions confronting history students and educators is: “What is the purpose of studying history at school?” Rightly so. One of the aspects related to history education and its purpose that I have already identified as a variable in the distances explored is my orientation towards history education as well as that of the students. My approach to history education also corresponds with the perspective and significance of historical thinking and literacy. This alignment provides me with a more theoretical basis for comprehending the purpose of history education and the real-world implications of pedagogical techniques in this domain.

Nonetheless, there remains ongoing debate and contention surrounding the objectives and intent of history education in South African schools (Kukard, 2017). Kukard (2017) refers to three orientations in history education: memory history, analytical history, and critical history. History aims to teach the national story in memory history – this is more or less the orientation I experienced with school-level History. The second approach, analytical history, centres on the idea that history education should equip students with analytical thinking abilities and skills. Acquiring these historical skills becomes increasingly crucial in an era where the past is accessible to people through various means due to the growing historical culture (De Bruijn, 2014). Educators impart history not to create miniature encyclopaedias of the past but to encourage students to think like historians, thereby participating in knowledge

acquisition (Bennett, 2014). However, Seixas (2008) points out that educators often face challenges when trying to engage their students in history as a discipline-centred form of inquiry that encompasses the methodologies and cognitive processes used by historians. This challenge arises because only a limited number of educators have been exposed to history education structured in this manner. I was introduced to analytical history unknowingly as a child outside the school setup and during my undergraduate studies as a history education student. Lastly, the third orientation of history education is critical history, which aims to equip students with the capacity to engage in society actively.

Early in my PhD journey, I read Kukard's (2017) description of different orientations and identities in history education to identify, understand, and explore my orientation and identity. This objective served as the initial step in exploring the formation of my orientation and identity, particularly in my role as a student of autoethnography. It also helped to position the study within the framework of transactional distance and historical distance. Each history education orientation has its civic and academic identity (Kukard, 2017). In the discussions that Kukard (2017) engaged in with history educationalists and educators regarding history as "what happened", she observed that there appeared to be more conventional views of history centred on chronological accounts. This perspective diverges from constructivist approaches, which prioritise enabling historiographical skills and imparting historical content. I perceive my academic and civic orientation and identity as a fusion of analytical and memory history.

Van Drie and van Boxtel (2008) introduced historical reasoning within the context of educational approaches in history instruction. In their view, broader notions like historical literacy and consciousness encompass general capabilities and mindsets. However, "historical reasoning" distinguishes itself by emphasising the active engagement of students. It underscores that students who study history acquire knowledge about the past and actively employ it to interpret past and present events. This focus on active participation and application of knowledge aligns with socio-constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories. These theories suggest that knowledge is actively built and shaped through mediums like

language and tools rather than being merely absorbed or accepted passively (Brown et al., 1989; Duffy and Jonassen, 1992, as cited in Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008).

Historical distance contributes to students' understanding regardless of the model or configurations used in a learning engagement (Pedersen, 2015a). To cultivate historical thinking skills and, subsequently, historical consciousness, it is essential to introduce students to the diverse perspectives on historical distance, the methodologies historians employ to interpret the past, and our relationship to historical events and figures (Pedersen, 2015a). Grasping the concept of historical distance can enhance and enrich students' comprehension of different facets of historical thinking. Regrettably, despite the growing literature on historical distance, there is still a notable gap in research concerning its relation to historical thinking and the implications for history education. Therefore, Pedersen (2015a) has called for more conversation around historical distance.

Literature Review on the Theory of Historical Distance

Unlike the theory of transactional distance that developed within a specific educational setting (namely distance education), historical distance developed within history and not that of history education. Therefore, I first had to explore the origins and development of historical distance through its philosophical and historical underpinnings and then explore it in history education.

Philosophical and Historical Underpinnings on Historical Distance

Since history became an established discipline in the 19th century, many historians and philosophers of history have pondered their connection to the subjects of their study and the appropriate methods for approaching them (De Bruijn, 2014). De Bruijn (2014) noted that historical distance has been framed metaphorically, denoting the gap between the current time when historians write and the bygone eras they research. Furthermore, philosophers of history have recently explored this metaphor in various intellectual contexts (Den Hollander et al., 2011; Grever et al., 2012). The metaphor carries multiple implications, spanning ontological,

epistemological, moral, aesthetic, and methodological dimensions. However, drawing clear distinctions between these interpretations of historical distance can be challenging (Den Hollander et al., 2011). Therefore, we cannot explain historical distance as a single problem or concept (Den Hollander et al., 2011). Simultaneously, the diverse interpretations and methodologies tied to the concept of distance explain why a universally accepted notion of historical distance is elusive. Generally speaking, certain theorists argue that historians should establish or preserve distance to reconstruct the past objectively (De Bruijn, 2014).

On the other hand, some concentrate on the challenge of historians comprehending the past while operating in the present, where contemporary values and concepts come into play (De Bruijn, 2014). Concurring with Huizinga's letter, Den Hollander et al. (2011) posited that historical distance is multifaceted, encompassing the essence of historical reality, the duties of a historian, and the best methods for undertaking such responsibilities. Thus, historical distance is not just seen as an issue or a notion but more as a metaphor that can adopt different interpretations in diverse situations.

I present two illustrations to illustrate the complexity and diversity of historical distance. First, historical distance is not solely determined by time; it is somewhat shaped by individuals' deliberate choices and actions (Phillips, 2004; Wilschut, 2019). Phillips (2004) demonstrates this point by contrasting the life of a medieval farmer's wife, representing a microhistorical example, with broader social and economic transformations in 20th-century societies, which represent a large-scale structural analysis. Knowing more about the farmer's wife decreases feelings of distance. By contrast, focusing on a society tends to increase feelings of distance, even if the 20th century is much closer than the Middle Ages (Wilschut, 2019). Hence, Phillips favours distantiation over historical distance, suggesting that the focus is on the action rather than just the concept (Wilschut, 2019). Secondly, Ankersmit (2007, p. 420, as translated by Wilschut, 2019) employed a stretched elastic band analogy, illustrating how we might unexpectedly discover that, at a certain point in human history, the past has separated from the present without our awareness. In specific aspects of human existence, the present keeps extending until the elastic band connecting the past and present snaps, resulting in a portion

that becomes the past and another part that remains the present. It is sometimes unclear when something creates continuity or discontinuity over time (Wilschut, 2019). Therefore, Wilschut (2019) affirms that it prompts whether people gravitate naturally towards either distancing themselves or drawing closer to the past and how such an action aligns with a historical awareness of time.

Experiences of authenticity, historical sensation, imagination, awareness, and experience form part of historical distance's philosophical and historical underpinnings. Grever et al. (2012) state that Huizinga's idea of historical sensation offers a unique lens through which to examine historical distance and grasp students' feelings when they engage with history. This sensation is a fleeting, unexpected moment in which the past emerges vividly, creating a direct connection to bygone times (Grever et al., 2012). At the heart of Huizinga's perspective is the emphasis on the genuine experience rather than on the object or event itself. He believes that true historical comprehension necessitates using historical imagination as its trigger and result (Grever et al., 2012). Therefore, Huizinga regularly emphasises the visual and aesthetic character of history (Grever et al., 2012). According to Huizinga, historical sensation is a product of historical imagination and, at the same time, acts as a catalyst for it, pushing boundaries and expanding perspectives (Grever et al., 2012). It involves envisioning an alternate reality and paving the way for a different line of thought (Grever et al., 2012). Still, Huizinga always emphasises the significance of pursuing truth and maintaining the logical integrity of historical writing (Grever et al., 2012).

Mathijsen (2009) and Huizinga (2014) acknowledged that historical awareness needs some emotion, a feeling of being moved or thrilled when encountering something new or unique about the past. However, Huizinga lifted historical awareness to a higher level; the researcher becomes one with the object during historical sensation. For Mathijsen (2009), during this awe-inspiring moment or instant, the past and present collide when they become the same. Consequently, a deeper insight into the past emerges. The historical sensation is more than remembering or reliving history; it is a seizing of the past, a resurrection. For

Ankersmit (1996), the past and the present come together with historical sensation. For Huizinga (2014), the object and subject, the past and present, merge (Mathijssen, 2009).

Historical sensation comes before historical experience. We need this distinctive moment to achieve historical understanding when we consider and understand the past as part of our daily lives (Mathijssen, 2009). According to Mathijssen (2009), our memories of the past unite the present and the past on both an individual and a societal level. Therefore, the past is no longer worthless; it has become valuable. Historical sensation opens our eyes to the historical dimension (Mathijssen, 2009). According to Grever et al. (2012), Ankersmit elaborated on Huizinga's idea in his examination of historical experience. He defines historical experience as a situation where we take the object of experience, like a painting, monument, or any other authentic historical artefact, out of its original historical context. In this context, the individual experiencing it, whether a historian, writer, educator, or student, becomes disconnected from the usual stream of experiences in which they are typically engaged (Grever et al., 2012). Furthermore, Grever et al. (2012) stated that building on Huizinga's ideas, Ankersmit regarded the historical experience as an inspirational source, viewing it as a special moment when individuals have direct access to the world of the past. Ankersmit underscored that not every human experience depends on language, as historical understanding is also formed through sensory perceptions (Grever et al., 2012). Grever et al. (2012) stated that the aesthetic encounter with authenticity in educational environments could significantly motivate historical thinking. Take, for instance, the scenario where students explore a historical structure, an archaeological site, or a natural landscape or engage with a narrative. In these situations, students can be moved by the intricacies and feel transported to the past, irrespective of whether their emotional response is triggered by actual or simulated authenticity (Grever et al., 2012). However, Grever et al. (2012) stated that the object or the story must spark the student's historical interest. A direct meeting with an object or past story arouses awareness of a past reality.

While the encounter with authenticity highlights emotions and sentiment, it can also stimulate contemplation regarding the unfamiliarity of the past (Grever et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, the process of reflection hinges on educators fostering an open mindset that motivates students to grasp the temporal and spatial contexts of the heritage in question. This approach should also allow students to ascribe significance to their encounters (Grever et al., 2012). Grever et al. (2012, p. 886) state that “articulating meaning postulates the use of language or any other form of expression”. Historical thinking necessitates clear verbal expression. The extent of verbalisation varies based on the particular social settings and the abilities of both students and educators (Grever et al., 2012). According to De Bruijn (2014), historical distance is established through the interaction and dialogue between educational resources and students. Once more, De Bruijn (2014) asserts that whether the past is perceived as distant or close and actively engaged with or approached more passively, it inevitably hinges on the student’s prior knowledge, personal experiences, and attitudes. According to Klein (2017), several studies have demonstrated how various forms of historical distancing impact students’ perceptions of history in various contexts, such as family narratives, museum displays, and digital media (Epstein, 1998; Greve et al., 2012; Peck, 2010; Phillips, 2002; Seixas, 1993; Smith et al., 2011).

Furthermore, recent research into how students from diverse cultural backgrounds interpret the past has revealed that their socially constructed identities sometimes influence their emotional reactions (Klein, 2017). In addition, according to Klein (2017), research has shed light on how students’ thought processes are shaped by how history is used in the present-day historical culture of societies. The status of a historical topic influences how students configure historical distance in a contemporary social context (Goldberg et al., 2008, as cited in Klein, 2017). These findings could serve as a sound foundation for educators to design assignments and activities to nurture historical thinking skills (Halvorsen et al., 2016; Savenije et al., 2014a, 2014b, as cited in Klein, 2017).

We must know that aesthetic experiences can be cognitively penetrable, although not always (Matthes, 2018). According to Korsmeyer (2012), the cognitive state of believing an object to be genuine possesses a distinct experiential quality, even without perceptual input. This quality permeates the perceptual encounter of the object and gives rise to an aesthetic

experience rich in contemplation, imagination, and emotion (Goldman, 2006). For Goldman (2006), historically essential works do not provide valuable experiences but are not of direct aesthetic value. If the works do not engage the observer's thoughts, emotions, and imagination, then they lack direct aesthetic value for that observer (Goldman, 2006). Korsmeyer (2012) refers to the magical thinking involved when one experiences direct contact with an actual historical object. Korsmeyer (2012, p. 372) suggests that encountering authenticity through touch creates a sense of connection, where touching something makes you a link in a chain that binds you to an original object, a creative source, a historical event, or others who have interacted with the same object, similar to how a magnet passes on its attraction through a chain of metal clips.

Zelevák (2011) suggests that historical writing can take the perspective of a direct or indirect reference. In the direct reference view, expressions are directly linked to the objects they represent, where "Rome", for example, signifies both the linguistic element and the city it refers to (Pedersen, 2015b; Zelevák, 2011). This approach represents past events without intermediating between historical reality and the historical text, thereby bridging the historical gap (Pedersen, 2015b). By contrast, the indirect reference view introduces a level of separation between a text and past reality. It implies the presence of an expression, a referent, and an intermediary between the past and its textual portrayal in the present (Zelevák, 2011). According to this perspective, a linguistic expression can never be directly connected to a referent in the past and is always linked through constructed meaning (Pedersen, 2015b; Zelevák, 2011). It argues that historians cannot linguistically transport themselves into the past and represent it as an unmediated reality (Pedersen, 2015b).

Different schools of historical thought have conceptualised historical distance over the years, creating ideal-typical attitudes towards it (Den Hollander et al., 2011). To understand various interpretations of historical distance, we can examine the evolution of approaches to this concept (Pedersen, 2015c). Throughout the 20th century, some theorists have emphasised the need for historians to either maintain or establish a distance to reenact the

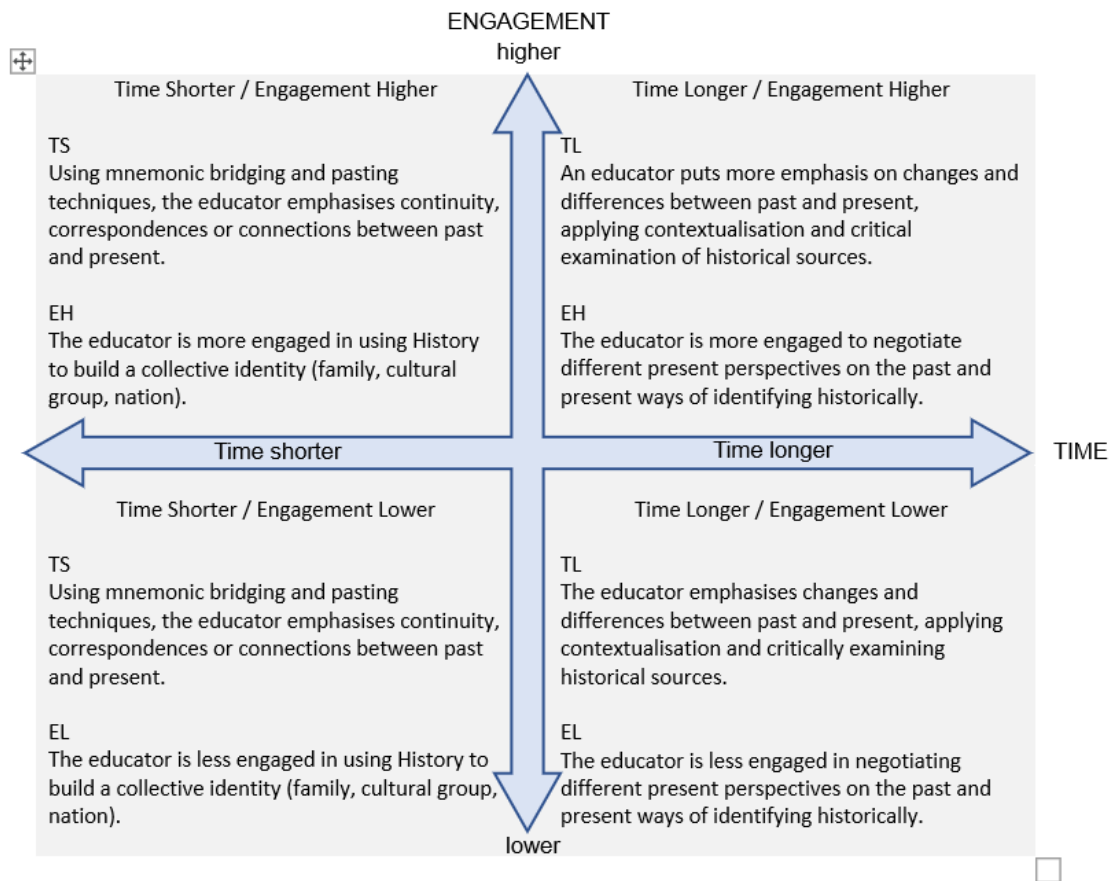
past objectively (De Bruijn, 2014). This has led to paradoxes and contradictions in the understanding, philosophical foundations, and development of historical distance.

The concept of the antinomy of distance, which represents a paradoxical situation where two reasonable beliefs or conclusions regarding historical distance in the aesthetic experience conflict, was introduced by Bullough in 1912. It aims to identify the appropriate emotional distance (neither overly engaged nor completely detached) required for creating or appreciating art (Deza & Deza, 2009). Kates (1971) also refers to the differentiation between a paradox and an antinomy of distances by stating that Bullough's explication of physical distance contains a paradox. The paradox or antinomy of distance may be stated as follows: How can an emotional attitude that is detached and involved exist? Since Bullough, the antinomy of distances has also been found in fields other than art, like history. There is an antinomy of distance because the historian engages the past intellectually, morally, and emotionally (Deza & Deza, 2006). We can easily cross the line between objectivity and subjectivity, and the distance can fluctuate in time (Deza & Deza, 2006, 2009).

Historical Distance In Education Drawing from the distinctions outlined in theoretical discussions about historical distance, Klein (2017) employed the concepts of time and engagement to establish an analytical framework. This framework was used to interpret, investigate, and reveal how Dutch history educators navigated the space between the past and the present. Additionally, it was employed to examine the disparities in how these educators approached the past, particularly from the perspective of gatekeepers (Klein, 2017) (see Figure 4.5). The framework takes the form of a two-dimensional coordination structure, distinguishing four quadrants that represent distinct combinations of engagement (either higher or lower) and time (either longer or shorter), as described by Klein (2017). These configurations involving time and engagement will always manifest in diverse and intricate forms and are not subject to mathematical quantification.

Figure 4.5

Different configurations of historical distance in history education (Klein, 2017, p. 81)



This approach, when we highlight the differences or divides between the past and the present and emphasise the need for historical contextualisation, can be termed “extended distancing” (Klein, 2017). Klein (2017) clarifies that in situations marked by extended distancing, the focus is on how educators aim to mediate and navigate the diverse contemporary perspectives on the past and the various methods used to identify them historically. Conversely, shorter distancing comes into play when participants give precedence to similarities or continuity, using mnemonic connections or techniques similar to pasting to bridge the gap between the past and present. Where there is a shorter distance, engagement focuses on how educators promote the building of collective identities (Klein, 2017).

Based on an extensive literature review, Huijgen et al. (2014) successfully refined three historical perspective-taking elements. The primary requirement for students to develop a historical perspective involves practising historical contextualisation, which is the construction of a framework of facts or conditions surrounding a specific historical event, thus enabling

students to describe, explain, compare, or assess it. When viewing events from a historical standpoint, the emphasis is on contextualising the past actions of individuals and groups. Students can use chronological, spatial, and socio-cultural reference points to achieve this. Secondly, students need to demonstrate historical empathy. This implies that students should aim to establish connections with individuals from the past using their historical knowledge, which will help them to comprehend the actions taken within historical contexts. Without the ability to put themselves in the shoes of individuals from the past, they are unlikely to truly comprehend it; the past would remain an inaccessible mystery. Thirdly, students should avoid the trap of presentism. This bias makes them erroneously assume that the same goals, attitudes, intentions, and beliefs today also existed in the past (Huijgen et al., 2014).

The capacity for historical perspective-taking is essential for students to attain historical reasoning and develop their skills in historical thinking (Huijgen et al., 2014). For Seixas and Peck (2004, cited in Huijgen et al., 2014), the historical perspective involves understanding the social, intellectual, cultural, and emotional context that influenced the lives and behaviours of people in the past. Seixas and Peck also stress the significance of recognising past and present distinctions. Historical perspective is “the application of the knowledge that historical agents had particular perspectives on their world that affected their actions” (Huijgen et al., 2014, p. 655). Therefore, students should be capable of using their understanding of historical context and chronology.

Introduction to Disciplinary Foundations of History and Historical Thinking

The concept of historical thinking has become increasingly significant in global research on history education (Thorp & Persson, 2020). At the core of the concept of historical thinking is the belief that the distinctiveness of history as a field of study rests on its disciplinary fundamentals (Lee, 1983, as cited in Thorp & Persson, 2020). Research in history education shares a central focus on historical thinking, which involves identifying and understanding the various cognitive skills that historians use to create historical narratives using the historical sources at their disposal. Consequently, historical thinking is pivotal in the theory and practice

of history education (Seixas, 2017). As a result, historical thinking is closely intertwined with academic history and the cultivation of competencies among academic historians (Carroll, 2019; Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Seixas, 2017, as cited in Thorp & Persson, 2020). Seixas and Morton (2013) state that their historical thinking model comes from historians' work. Historical thinking is fundamentally concerned with addressing the intricate challenges of comprehending the past and rendering it meaningful for contemporary society and culture. It is also deeply rooted in how individuals orient themselves within the ongoing continuum of the past, present, and future. Therefore, according to Thorp and Persson (2020), it is more apt to view historical thinking as a concept linked to the cognitive processes that academic historians undertake when constructing historical narratives.

As a result, historical thinking is a creative process that historians engage in to interpret historical evidence and construct narratives about the past (Seixas & Morton, 2013). The connection between the past and the present is a fundamental aspect that forms the foundation of theories about history learning, including the concepts outlined by Seixas, known as historical thinking concepts (De Bruijn, 2014). Seixas and Morton (2013) present historical thinking concepts as a starting point for rethinking history teaching. Upon careful examination and in-depth analysis, each historical thinking concept unveils a tension or challenge that may not have a definitive resolution in the ultimate sense (Seixas & Morton, 2013). The connection between past and present has held significant importance in theories of history education, exemplified by the historical thinking concepts articulated by Seixas (De Bruijn, 2014).

Various capacities are included to develop strategic knowledge dispositions needed for historical understanding (VanSledright, 2002). In essence, this theory encompasses several essential components: first, the process of verifying sources by evaluating them concerning each other; second, the understanding of a source author's perspective within a historical narrative while also recognising the impact of investigators on their interpretation of the text; and thirdly, the development of interpretations that are rooted in context and substantiated by evidence. In summary, this theory involves various investigative practices

employed by historians to develop the cognitive capacity to grasp events and occurrences from the past effectively.

The concepts, collectively known as “The Big Six” in historical thinking, highlight challenges in creating history. This framework, consisting of six key elements, is designed to assist students in comprehending how historians approach writing and thinking about the past. It also deals with the challenge of the temporal separation between the present and the past, which historians must contend with as they explore history (De Bruijn, 2014). Students’ capability to proficiently deal with the complexities, subtleties, and difficulties associated with historical thinking concepts forms the basis for evaluating their progress in developing competence in historical thinking (Seixas & Morton, 2013). In other words, when historical concepts expose inherent challenges, addressing and resolving these challenges can result in proficiency, a term frequently used in contemporary educational discussions (Seixas & Morton, 2013). For Seixas and Morton (2013), these concepts have relevance not only for the most straightforward historical narratives a student might construct but also for the most advanced writings that an academic historian equipped with specialised training might produce. The six concepts are presented as historians’ strategies in response to six critical problems. Six guiding questions express these problems (Seixas & Morton, 2013). These same questions can be asked concerning educators and students. What criteria do historians employ to determine the crucial aspects of past events worth studying? What methods do historians employ to acquire knowledge about historical events? How do historians decipher and make sense of the intricate patterns in the course of history? What are the underlying causes of historical events, and what are the consequences they entail? In what ways can historians gain deeper insight into the lives and perspectives of people from bygone eras? How can our understanding of the past contribute to our present-day existence?

If you seek benchmarks for instructing historical distance, “The Big Six” framework by Seixas and Morton is an excellent exemplar (Pedersen, 2015a). As outlined in the ensuing sections, the six essential historical concepts are the cornerstone of historical investigation. These concepts comprise a six-part framework designed to aid students in considering how

historians take the past and convert it into history, thus enabling them to embark on their historical construction.

Historians establish historical significance (Seixas & Morton, 2013). The concept of significance pertains to why specific historical events or individuals hold importance while others do not (Thorp & Persson, 2020). Significant events have led to substantial and enduring transformations that have affected many people over extended periods (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). Therefore, according to Seixas (2017), historians encounter the challenge of discerning historical significance due to the inherent, unchanging character of the past. As a result, an inevitable tension concerning historical significance emerges within the array of viewpoints regarding significance. This tension hovers between the objective, universally accepted meanings established by historians and the isolated interests of antiquarianism, which focuses on studying old and rare objects and their history (Seixas, 2017). Students participating in history education should have the ability to articulate narratives about a specific event that can be reasonably constructed and that resonate within a broader community. However, what qualifies as legitimate in this context hinges on addressing some of the other historical thinking challenges.

Historians rely on primary source evidence, as Seixas and Morton (2013) outlined. Primary sources include letters, documents, records, diaries, sketches, newspaper reports, and fragments. These sources are remnants left behind by individuals who have bequeathed their treasures to historians (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). Primary sources have the potential to unveil the secrets of life. Historians develop the skill of interpreting these sources, but it is crucial to emphasise that reading a source for evidence requires a different approach than reading it for information.

Pedersen (2015a) points out that classroom materials such as texts, sources, and narratives shape the historical distance between educators, students, and the past. When combined with other sources, primary documents create historical distance from the events they describe to readers in the present. Through the text, readers establish a sense of separation between themselves and the past events the sources represent (Pedersen,

2015a). Also, Phillips (2004, as cited in Grever et al., 2012) argues that a feeling of historical distance is inherent in every encounter with a historical text, just as it is an integral aspect of every museum or commemorative monument visit. Nonetheless, according to VanSledright (2002, p. 1092), fostering historical thinking and comprehension necessitates providing students with opportunities to discover and work with various forms of evidence, deal with issues of interpretation, ask and adjudicate questions about the relative significance of events and the nature of historical agency, and cultivate a thoughtful, context-sensitive imagination to fill gaps in evidence trails when they arise.

The challenge of primary source evidence extends beyond the mere task of interpreting these sources, as Seixas (2017) emphasises. This concern presupposes that sources are readily available for analysis by historians, even in a history classroom. However, it overlooks two equally essential components: first, the questions or lines of inquiry that these sources may help address or enhance, and second, the existing knowledge about the context in which these sources exist (Seixas, 2017). These three components – text, context, and the questions that guide the inquiry – interact dynamically for historians in a well-organised history classroom. This dynamic interplay among these three elements generates the complex challenge associated with primary source evidence (Seixas, 2017).

Historians examine continuity and change (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Questions concerning continuity and change involve the examination of the disruptions and persisting patterns between the present and the past (Seixas, 2017; Thorp & Persson, 2020). When delving into the study of continuity and change, historians analyse alterations in historical events while searching for concealed or underlying continuities (Seixas, 2017; Thorp & Persson, 2020). However, viewing history as a complex amalgamation of continuity and change results in a fundamentally different understanding of the past (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). As applied in historical reasoning, the concepts of change and continuity serve as potent tools for analysing and gaining critical insights into contemporary issues. This is achieved by comparing present-day circumstances with those of the past, which students acquire through history lessons. Moreover, the recognition that

interpretations of historical events are subjective representations and are influenced by the identity of the interpreter (such as age, gender, generation, ethnic origin, religion, and profession) fosters the development of critical thinking and an openness to diverse cultures and perspectives (De Bivar Black, 2022).

Historians analyse cause and consequence (Seixas & Morton, 2013) by asking questions about how and why things happened in the past. These questions explore underlying causes and consequences (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). We must ask what individuals' actions, beliefs, and circumstances led to these results. When studying history, historians must consider the concept of human agency, acknowledging that individuals and groups can instigate, shape, and resist change. People have motivations and rationales for their actions or inaction, but the causes extend beyond these individual factors. Consequently, causes and consequences are multifaceted and intricate, encompassing enduring ideologies, institutions, conditions, short-term motivations, actions, and events (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.).

Furthermore, the causes proposed for a specific event (and the relative importance assigned to different causes) can vary depending on the scope of the historical analysis and the historian's methodologies (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). Offering historical explanations entails confronting the challenge of historical causation (Braun, 2013, as cited in Seixas, 2017). Therefore, a historian's responsibility is to place human decision-making into communication, choice, and intention while considering historical context and circumstances (Seixas, 2017).

Historians engage in historical perspective-taking to gain insight into the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional contexts that influenced the lives and actions of people in the past (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). This is a challenging task because "the past is a foreign country", making it difficult to fully comprehend historical realities. Overcoming this challenge is a significant endeavour for students, but it offers valuable rewards. It sheds light on the diversity of human behaviour, beliefs, and social structures, presenting unexpected alternatives to our conventional

understanding. It also provides a broader perspective for evaluating our contemporary concerns. In essence, historical perspective-taking involves grappling with the complex question of how we can grasp the thoughts and experiences of individuals who lived in vastly different historical contexts from our own (Seixas, 2017).

Historical perspective-taking involves recognising that individuals in the past may have acted based on conflicting beliefs and ideologies (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). Understanding these diverse perspectives is a crucial aspect of this process. While historical perspective-taking is sometimes likened to historical empathy, it differs from the common-sense idea of simply identifying with another person. To truly take a historical perspective, students must grasp the significant differences between people in the past and present. It requires creating a sense of distance from the past, which is essential for developing historical empathy rather than mere identification with historical figures (De Bruijn, 2014). However, it is essential to acknowledge that our frames of reference inevitably influence our reconstructions of the past, and we cannot entirely escape this influence (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

Multi-perspectivity, closely tied to historical distance, pertains to the varied viewpoints held by those who create historical accounts (historians) and the diverse perspectives of individuals who were witnesses to historical events or developments. These witnesses produced evidence reflecting their unique viewpoints (De Bruijn, 2014). Including or excluding multiple perspectives can significantly influence the configuration of historical distance. Therefore, historians value distance by maintaining enough detachment to consider the past from various viewpoints. Many scholars argue that it is essential to acknowledge and incorporate the various perspectives that students may already possess into a thoughtful approach to teaching in educational settings like schools and museums (Barton & McCully, 2007, 2012; Klein, 2017; Lévesque, 2005, 2008; Marcus et al., 2012).

Multi-perspectivity, akin to source analysis, plays a pivotal role in understanding history's complexity. It underscores that the interpretation of historical events can significantly differ depending on the perspective of the historian, politician, journalist, television producer,

or eyewitness. It is vital to acknowledge that historical accounts are subject to change, and a single definitive version of an event is rare. Multi-perspectivity also entails distinguishing between facts and opinions, recognising that there is no universal historical truth, but rather diverse interpretations of the same event (De Bivar Black, 2022).

In history education, multi-perspectivity signifies that history is subjective and interpretive, featuring various coexisting narratives about specific events. This challenges the notion of a single, objective historical representation (De Bivar Black, 2020). Scholars propose that this interpretive approach should go beyond relativism, advocating for instructing students to assess and compare the credibility of different narratives using established disciplinary standards. As societies become more culturally and ethnically diverse, it becomes practical and crucial for students to explore diverse viewpoints. This process helps to foster a shared understanding of different cultures and prepares students to engage responsibly in democratic societies (De Bivar Black, 2020).

According to Seixas and Morton (2013), historians try to grasp the moral dimension of history. When adopting a historical perspective, it is essential to recognise the disparities between our current moral values and those of past societies (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). We should avoid imposing our anachronistic ethical standards on the past. However, this does not mean that history should treat morally reprehensible actions of the past impartially. Historians strive to avoid making explicit ethical judgements about historical actors in their accounts. Nevertheless, ethical judgement becomes relevant when the narrative holds significance. Consequently, both historians and students should anticipate gaining insights from the past that can aid in addressing contemporary ethical dilemmas.

Seixas (2017) outlines three interconnected issues when discussing the ethical dimensions of history. First, the challenge of assessing historical actors and their actions from the past. Second, addressing past crimes and injustices is the consequence we still experience today, whether through benefits or disadvantages. Finally, it acknowledges the responsibilities of contemporary individuals towards the victims, heroes, or earlier generations whose sacrifices continue to shape our present circumstances.

The six historical thinking concepts lack meaning without including material, topics, substance, or what is commonly referred to as the content of history (Seixas & Morton, 2013). However, just “as the concepts make no sense without historical content, historical content cannot be truly understood as anything other than a succession of disconnected bits of data to be memorised without grasping the historical thinking concepts” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 4). The concepts and content are interdependent in historical understanding. Furthermore, the concepts do not operate in isolation; they function collaboratively as different facets of the thinking process (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Furthermore, the framework developed by Seixas and Morton (2013) supports educational progression. It enables students to transition from relying on an easily accessible, everyday understanding of the past to employing the most significant intellectual tools within their culture for comprehending history. Such a model using guideposts and levels of understanding would be beneficial for teaching historical distance (Pedersen, 2015a; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Seixas and Morton (2013) also observe that these concepts provide educators with a language to engage in discussions with students about the process of constructing histories and what constitutes credible historical arguments. As history educators, we aim to help students gradually develop this ability, making it challenging but not overwhelming (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Otherwise, students reading history may remain passive and reluctant consumers of someone else’s interpretations (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

Pedersen (2015a) presents an example in Seixas and Morton (2013), but alternative conceptualisations of historical thinking are also available. In recent decades, three primary approaches to historical thinking have emerged: one rooted in the pragmatic and instruction-oriented British Schools Council History Project, another influenced by the more philosophical field of history didactics and historical consciousness in Germany, and a third originating in the United States (Seixas, 2017). Each of these approaches is influenced by the historiography and philosophy of their respective national traditions. Canadian history educators have also adopted a practical combination of historical thinking concepts (Seixas, 2017).

Critics have raised several concerns about the model of historical thinking promoted by Seixas and Morton's Historical Thinking Project, which is widely adopted in Canada. Some of these criticisms include the accusation that it lacks a theoretical foundation, does not adequately address the interpretive nature of history, and does not sufficiently consider the dynamic interplay between the past, present, and future, as captured by the concept of historical consciousness. Furthermore, critics argue that it fails to establish a strong connection between the six individual historical thinking concepts. However, in response to these criticisms, Seixas (2017) attempted to develop a more coherent model of historical thinking that addresses these concerns. This revised model aimed to better illustrate how historical concepts are rooted in the fundamental relationship between the past and the present, drawing insights from multiple national traditions and demonstrating the interconnectedness of these concepts. This improved framework was intended to provide educators and students with a more comprehensive and effective tool for teaching and learning history in schools.

Ricoeur (1995, p. 3) describes historical consciousness as “a consciousness of something, a moving outside of oneself to the object or phenomenon intended”. Historical consciousness encompasses where individuals situate themselves on the time continuum and how they are influenced by the historical and cultural contexts that mould their perception of time and shared memory (Clark & Peck, 2018). In other words, an awareness and understanding of time are central to historical consciousness (Wilschut, 2019). No person or group can have historical consciousness without a past vision (Du Pisani, 2007). Additionally, individuals raised in regions with particular narratives, imagery, rituals, and gaps in knowledge regarding the past actively seek, construct, or modify existing narratives to align with their desired historical identity while avoiding those that do not fit (Grever & Adriaansen, 2019). Thus, Grever and Adriaansen (2019, p. 814) say, “Becoming aware of any past in the present is dynamic and constantly changing, both on collective and individual levels, and is usually referred to as historical consciousness.”

Rüsen describes historical consciousness as the process of giving meaning to the past. The past must be interpreted and understood to comprehend the present and anticipate the future (Clark & Peck, 2018). However, historical consciousness goes beyond comprehending how individuals think about history. According to Lévesque, studying historical consciousness allows us to grasp how people utilise the past in various ways (Clark & Peck, 2018). The definitions of historical consciousness encompass humanity's evolving fascination with its past and shed light on how people acquire and interact with historical knowledge and practices over time. As such, historical consciousness spans every aspect of considering the past, as emphasised by Rüsen, ranging from scholarly historical studies to the personal and societal utilisation and role of history (Clark & Peck, 2018). Furthermore, examining historical consciousness underscores history's foundational role in shaping individuals' self-perception (Clark & Peck, 2018).

Recognising distinctions between periods also enhances our perception of historical remoteness, making certain eras appear more or less unfamiliar (Wilschut, 2019). This phenomenon became particularly significant after the late 18th century and its profound industrialisation. During this period, the European colonial system and the establishment of modern science had a profound impact, leading to significant changes in living conditions around the globe (Nordgren, 2019). Consequently, thinkers such as Hegel, Gadamer, Koselleck, and Arendt developed fresh perspectives on time and transformation rooted in the concept of process as a fundamental element of modern historical awareness (Nordgren, 2019). For instance, Arendt (1961, as cited in Nordgren, 2019) characterises this novel approach to comprehending history as a concept that fundamentally distinguishes the modern era from prior conceptions of the past, surpassing any other single notion in significance.

Du Pisani (2007) crafts a comprehensive definition of historical consciousness, drawing from various other definitions. According to this definition, historical consciousness is a dynamic mental awareness culturally rooted and shaped by an individual's understanding of how a series of past historical events has influenced their current place within a broader group. This awareness encompasses various elements, such as one's perspective on time and

chronology, the ability to categorise historical periods, recognition of change and transition, an understanding of cause and effect, and a sense of development. Historical consciousness significantly impacts individual and group behaviour in the present and their aspirations for the future.

By contrast, Wilschut (2019) explores two types of temporal consciousness that reflect past ways of perceiving time: intuitive, spontaneous, and unnatural temporal. The first type is associated with quick, simplistic judgements about the past, present, and future. The second type corresponds to more complex, open, critical, and multifaceted perspectives on societal developments. Wilschut (2019) identifies six characteristics that distinguish historical consciousness of time from other temporal experiences: anachronism, historical distance, contingency, historical narration, chronology, and evidence as a bridge between past and present.

It became evident during the exploration of these concepts that they did not develop rapidly among students. Instead, they acknowledged that, to some extent, these concepts were unnatural and counter-intuitive. Consequently, it was realised that historical awareness of time is a product of formal, informal, official, and unofficial history education and does not spontaneously emerge in individuals.

History Education Orientations and Identity Development

According to Maposa and Wassermann (2009, p. 41), one of the lasting questions faced by students and educators in history is: “What is the purpose of studying history at school?” Rightly so. One of the aspects related to history education and its purpose that I have already identified as a variable in transactional distance is my orientation towards history education.

As per the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for Social Sciences in the Intermediate Phase, history examines societal development and change over time (Department of Education, 2011, p. 10). This subject empowers individuals to comprehend and evaluate how past human actions influence the present and future. It encourages critical

thinking about past and present events, involving an investigative process that asks questions such as “What happened?” “When did it happen?” and “Why did it happen?” (Department of Education, 2011, p. 10). History also entails thinking about the narratives that people share regarding the past and how we internalise that information (The Republic of South Africa, 2011, p. 10). According to the CAPS (The Republic of South Africa, 2011, p. 10), the objectives of the subject of History include “fostering curiosity and enjoyment in studying the past, gaining knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of historical events and their underlying forces, developing historical inquiry skills, and grasping historical concepts, including the use of historical evidence and sources”.

The primary concern raised in the Report of the History Ministerial Task Team (Ndlovu et al., 2018) revolves around the purpose and objectives of teaching history at the school level. It questions whether history should primarily serve a civic function or focus on imparting the distinctive concepts and skills associated with the discipline of history. The suggested curriculum adjustment aims to facilitate the development of a critical inquiry approach among students. This adjustment does not necessarily signify a return to constructivism but calls for carefully aligning historical narratives and sources with the cultivation of relevant concepts and skills. Notably, the principal objective of History, the subject, on the African continent encompasses fostering an understanding of the past and its contemporary relevance, promoting comprehension and application of historical concepts and methodologies, nurturing critical thinking, and instilling a sense of national or African identity and belonging (Ndlovu et al., 2018). Additionally, history education aims to evoke patriotism, encourage active and responsible citizenship, instil values, attitudes, and behaviours, and cultivate skills conducive to harmonious coexistence.

I regard it as essential to note the variations in the History Ministerial Task Team’s Report (Ndlovu et al., 2018) on history concepts. To begin with, the text includes numerous historical terms and ideas, including but not limited to revolution, democracy, justice, power, tolerance, peace, solidarity, race, racism, and ethnicity (Ndlovu et al., 2018). The same report discusses concepts that are relevant in the CAPS (2012) document for the Intermediate

Phase, including sources and evidence, multi-perspectivity, cause and effect, change and continuity, and time and chronology (Ndlovu et al., 2018). However, there is a valid concern that the objectives, concepts, and skills lack precise definitions, and integrating these concepts and skills into the History curriculum is not robust. Establishing well-defined benchmarks for these concepts and skills is imperative to address this issue while making explicit connections between the curriculum content, concepts, and skills (Ndlovu et al., 2018).

I read Kukard (2017) on orientation and identities for history education to identify my history orientation and identity. The intention was a starting point for investigating the development of my orientation and identity (for my autoethnographic study) and positioning it within the framework of transactional distance. Each history education orientation has its civic and academic identity (Kukard, 2017, p. 32). I deemed my orientation and identity, both academic and civic, to be a combination of analytical history and memory history. Kukard (2017) observes a prevalence of traditional historical perspectives rooted in chronology and discussions with history educationalists and educators, where history is often seen as “what happened”. This perspective contrasts with more constructivist approaches, emphasising the facilitation of historiography and the exploration of historical content.

Educator Beliefs, Identity and Pedagogical Approaches in History Education

It is beneficial to revisit identity and how it is created to understand the orientation, identity, and pedagogical approaches of history education. Developing my orientation in history education can be associated with forming my identity. Each person has a unique blend of “traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define them” – this is their identity (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 69). Sometimes, the terms “self” and “identity” are used when talking about “the process of making sense of the world in terms of what matters to me or the consequences of social contexts on a variety of beliefs and perceptions about the self” (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 8). Sometimes, “self” and “identity” denote belonging to socio-demographic categories, such as gender or social class (Frale, 1997, as cited in Oyserman et al., 2012). Identity formation is an ongoing process of evaluating

lived experiences (Green et al., 2010). An individual's identity is constantly informed, shaped, and reshaped as they grow and engage with others (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Oyserman et al., 2012).

Similarly, the orientation and identity of the lecturer and the culture (the pre-service educators) are developed over time. However, orientation and identity also differ since lived experience differs from person to person. This differentiation and perceived necessary change in orientation creates transactional distance in online History modules. Green et al. (2010) state that when change is apparent, educators (pre-service educators in this study) feel vulnerable because change influences their self-image and identity. People often develop ways "to protect themselves against being forced to see themselves in another way" (Nias, 1989, as cited in Green et al., 2010, p. 310). Understanding the concept of pre-service educator identity is crucial for assessing the readiness of student educators to embrace change (Green et al., 2010). Beliefs can change over time as pre-service educators refine and reflect on their pedagogical practices (Buehl & Fives, 2009; Olafson & Schraw, 2006). However, tensions naturally arise in the narrative as the educator, particularly a student educator, grapples with the challenge of constructing a professional identity, which may involve integrating conflicting ideas and perspectives (Alsup, 2006; Green et al., 2010).

Consequently, an educator's identity should not be perceived as one fixed identity but as something that is unstable and fragile (Green et al., 2010). According to Green et al. (2010), an educator continually integrates events from the outside world and sorts them into their account or autobiography to create a story about the self. Educators' professional and personal knowledge becomes evident when they teach and can be discerned through the narratives they construct as they navigate their self-discovery. Consequently, self-reflection plays a crucial role as a learning tool, enabling educators to cultivate coherent and well-structured knowledge frameworks that systematically and progressively inform their actions in practice (Green et al., 2010).

Identity and social identity theories play a significant role in developing educator identity. This is because educator identity is influenced by micro-sociological theories that

explain how individuals' role-related behaviours are shaped (Green et al., 2010). These theories were also relevant to the formation of my identity as a history education educator and lecturer. By contrast, social identity theory is a social psychological theory primarily focused on explaining intergroup relations and the dynamics of group processes (Hogg et al., 1995). For Hogg et al. (1995, p. 225), these theories place a "primary theoretical emphasis on a multifaceted and dynamic self that mediates the relationship between social structure and individual behaviours".

According to Green et al. (2010), educators' professional identity is formed by their experiences in the classroom. However, their belief in pedagogical practice is influenced by their broader educational experiences (Bennett, 2014). Thus, pre-service educators also construct their theories on teaching by reflecting on their education experience. Experienced educators have cultivated extensive and well-structured knowledge reservoirs, enabling them to readily tap into their past experiences (Green et al., 2010). By contrast, the novice educator, or in this context, the pre-service educator, has not yet developed that well-organised knowledge base. Interestingly, the educator's professional identity is also about understanding their experience, reacting, and identifying with various groups in different contexts (Green et al., 2010; Sachs, 2005).

All educators hold beliefs (among others, about their role, the role of the students, and the content) which mediate their instructional choices in the classroom and classroom instructions (Bennett, 2014). In other words, educators' beliefs influence the moment-to-moment events in a school. The relationship between beliefs and practices indicates the influence on perceptions and judgements and the effect on school behaviour. Green et al. (2010) confirm this link by stating that the culture includes the community's understanding and values, which leads to a specific way of working or doing things.

Autoethnography in Historical Distance

Lubbe (2010) highlights some challenges that history educators face in designing and assessing heritage investigation and the need for educators to be proactive in their professional development. In this qualitative study, the history educators did a short course called School History Enrichment, which was offered for ten years by the University of South Africa, South Africa's largest university. However, the focus was on the role of open distance learning in history skills development at the FET level and on the self-confidence and skills of educators.

A qualitative case study by Saripudin and Yulifar (2018) focused on implementing history learning using distance learning at open schools. The authors noted various obstacles, including that the students experienced difficulties finding sources, and most could not attend online synchronous learning due to family obligations. In addition, the students already had jobs, which caused them to lack focus on learning. Furthermore, implementing an open school policy regarding facilities, special training for the managers, and the absence of references to the main learning tools such as syllabus and lesson plans seemed to be a challenge.

As an educator and lecturer in history education, I cannot disregard the importance of autoethnography in educator education, especially in the South African context where great diversity exists. According to a study by Hayler (2011, as cited in Legge, 2014), there is an expanding collection of studies focused on the education of educators. However, the voices of the lecturers of pre-service educators have mainly been absent from the literature until recently. Educators rarely disclose the personal aspects of their pedagogy, for example, how they cope with competing definitions and their vulnerability and credibility (Britzman, 2003, as cited in Legge, 2014). Like Legge (2014), I want to break this mould of silence and reflectivity and move back and forth between being a researcher, an educator, and a student. Since autoethnography is crucial for critical interrogation and emancipatory practices (Austin & Hickey, 2007), workplace research is vital, especially for educator education. The research is relevant to the task since I critically analyse my actions and behaviour (Legge, 2014).

Investigating personal aspects in the professional realm of higher education can be a powerful instrument (De Lautour, 2009, as cited in Legge, 2014).

Educators must delve into the factors that have shaped their identities to understand the societal and cultural narratives and the methods that have moulded them (Miller, 2009, as cited in Legge, 2014). This understanding allows them to evolve beyond their ingrained beliefs and better scrutinise the content, techniques, strategies, and values they introduce to the educational process. Legge (2014) mentions that Miller's in-depth, personal study on educator training implies that teacher-researchers can display their human sensitivities through heightened self-awareness. By cultivating this introspective awareness, educators can rejuvenate their teaching methods and be ready to recognise and address their limitations and habitual tendencies.

Conclusion to Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room

My theoretical and conceptual framework journey can be compared to Carroll's *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*, falling down a rabbit hole into an unknown land after chasing the white rabbit. The rabbit hole went straight down like a tunnel. Then, the tunnel dipped so suddenly that Alice could not stop herself before falling into what seemed to be a bottomless well (Carroll, 2000). Researchers in various fields and I have only explored a small part of this new land, in my case, an autoethnography on transactional and historical distances in history education. Like Alice, I had moments to retrieve items from the cabinet, examine them, and return them to their place. Carroll (2000, p. 2) wrote:

It was a very strange hole. Alice was falling very slowly, and she had time to think and to look around her. She could see nothing below her because it was so dark. But when she looked at the sides of the hole, she could see cupboards and books and pictures on the walls. She had time to take things out of the cupboard, look at them, and then put them back in a cupboard lower down.

The chapter, *Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room*, focused on the second part of the theoretical and conceptual framework, namely the theory of historical distance. With the second focus on historical distance, I discussed the development of various approaches, dimensions, and implications of historical distance in history education. In addition, I reviewed the primary literature on historical distance in history education to highlight the research done in this field and eventually support some of the research gaps I am filling with this study.

In the following room, *The Cabinets of Curiosities*, I explore and analyse the collected and constructed data exhibited and stored in three cabinets of curiosities.

die skaapstrapoe pad. Dit is toe dat oupa die perde hoor
en die karwiele. ^{hoor} Hy hetken toe die perdekar wat aankom,
die perde op 'n vinnige stap. Hy hetken ook die drie mans.
"Naad julle, Iederike weer, ne?" Niemand groet nie.
"Die vrou het warm koffie, wil julle nie aankom nie?" sê die
die skaap hond kom om die hok van die kraal, steek vier voet vas
toe hy die perdekar sien en die hare reis op sy rug. Toe
gêe hy 'n ^{skrikke} draak in veldwijn stap tussen die perde die
wart op huis toe. So knyp-knyp soos iemand met groot nood.
"Wil julle nie afdim nie" vra oupa weer, ^{hoor} maar die drie donker
figure op die kar kyk nie eens na hom nie. Op 'n vinnige stap
gaan hulle verby, windop na waar die perde raam oor
was sa wart a kom. Out vloors is die kraal. K totjane

Chapter 5

Cabinets of Curiosities

*"To be human is to have a collection of memories
that tells you who you are and how you got there."*

- Rosecrans Baldwin

CHAPTER 5: MY CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES

Introduction to my Cabinets of Curiosity

Traditionally, the cabinet of curiosities stored and exhibited various unusual objects and artefacts, particularly leaning toward the rare, eclectic, and esoteric (Galambosova, 2022). In these cabinets, you would find skulls, famous illustrations, two-headed snakes in a glass bottle, or strange shells from far-off lands. In my case, and for this autoethnography, I stored various memories, memory objects (like photographs and documents), self-observation and reflection in the form of field notes, interviews, and a questionnaire. I, the collector, brought all the significant objects together in a single collection, similar to putting together the ceramic pieces found at different times on the Springfield farm (see Figure 5.1). Fortunately, I found two pieces that fit together. Similarly, I am searching, finding and putting specific pieces of my life together, like building a puzzle with the collected and constructed pieces.

Figure 5.1

Pieces of ceramic from the same old broken plate were found in a field (photograph taken by Adrienne van As)



In this room, the collection and construction of data are exhibited in three cabinets of curiosity (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3), aiming to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors influence transactional and historical distances from an autoethnography account and perspective in history education?
2. How do lived experiences influence transactional and historical distances from an autoethnography account and perspective in history education?

Thus, the purpose of the three cabinets of curiosities in this room is to explore and understand transactional distance, historical distance, and its factors, especially from an autoethnographic perspective within history education.

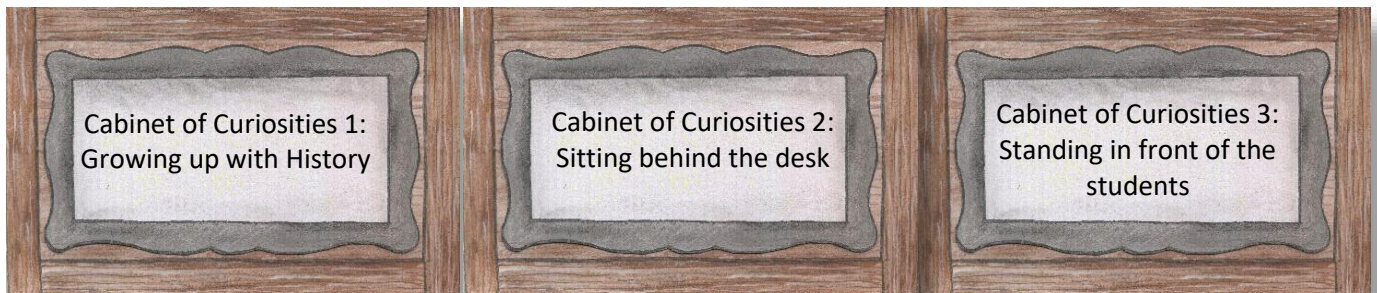
Figure 5.2

Opening my exhibited and stored data in my three cabinets of curiosities



Figure 5.3

The three cabinets of curiosities



When entering this room, it is essential to remember that the purpose of the cabinets of curiosity is twofold: there is a personal meaning for the collector and some meaning for the viewer and the audience. As the collector, for me, the curiosity cabinets are subjective and dynamic and reflect moments in my life, interests, and broader networks within which I operate. While the traditional collector strives to find a connection to the items (also the purpose for its viewers), I already had a connection with the items due to the autoethnographic format of this study; among others, it is my memories, my experiences, and my objects. Like the collectors of old, I experimented with different ways of understanding and ordering this world, although with a more organised approach. Just like my mother still keeps rearranging the contents of her living room, I rearranged my constructed data and cabinets until I only had three. I played around with the cabinets' numbers, format, and content, which are often intertwined.

Traditional cabinets of curiosities aimed to impress the viewer with lavishness and abundance as they wandered through and past the cabinets. However, this was not my aim. Instead, the viewer can open the metaphorical doors and drawers and examine the data on the shelves, niches, and boxes. The content of each cabinet is not necessarily transparent, but it is open to interpretation. Bowry (2015, p. 35) wrote: "Meaning is actively created by the viewer's interaction with the work and the environment in which they find it at the given moment in time". Therefore, I ask the viewer to look into the mirrors one often finds in curiosity cabinets. In addition, the viewer is faced with the conception of my world. For this reason, even though

the cabinets of curiosities intend to answer the research questions, they also reflect the collector's taste and identity, almost like a self-portrait.

First Cabinet Of Curiosity: Growing Up With History

In this first curiosity cabinet, I have focused on the stories I grew up with and all the places we visited during my childhood. In this way, I am storing lived experience to explore how history was and became a companion and how transactional and historical distance, in varying degrees, became part of this companionship.

My First Cabinet Of Curiosity

I grew up with stories, especially my father's stories. My father was the storyteller who read us stories in the evenings before we went to bed, while my mom usually baked to make ends meet. Moreover, my father told stories when we visited people or they visited us. We would sit around the kitchen table with a cup of coffee or a glass of red wine (obviously, the wine drinking only came later when I was older), in the sitting room, around the fire outside, and even while driving around. Figure 5.4 shows my father, mother, and Heine typically sitting around a makeshift fire, braaiing wors (sausage) at the nearest river to "trek springers" (catch fish with a net).

Figure 5.4

My father, mother and Heine are sitting around the makeshift fire



Note. Normally, we would braai wors, and my father would tell stories while waiting for the fish to get caught in the net (photograph by Adrienne van As).

Moreover, in my lived experience, there is no better place than sitting around a fire or the kitchen table to listen to stories. The stories were historical and primarily based on the people, places, and events in the Strandveld, where my father grew up. However, the stories were more widespread due to my father's experiences, travels, and visits and the stories he had read and heard. During my childhood, we also visited places with historical significance: the Strandveld, in and around Cape Town, the Western Cape and even, to a lesser degree, other provinces of South Africa. Naturally, I cannot remember all the stories and visits, although I do remember several, mainly due to repetition, as they were deemed worthy of retelling.

The Strandveld – Where My Father's Stories Were Born

The Strandveld was the world my father grew up in. Consequently, it formed the background – almost central – to many stories and our visits during my childhood and even today. Initially, we frequently visited my grandmother Rali, my father's mother. At that time, she stayed in Church Street in Bredasdorp, at my aunt and uncle's beach house in Struis Bay, especially during holidays. However, after her passing in 1986, we stayed at Uncle Boet's farm in Rhenosterkop or with my Aunt At or my Aunt Ria in Struis Bay (later, they moved to Agulhas), where we visited and stayed over, and, consequently, had a less expensive long weekend or holiday. And then, of course, there were the various family and friends we visited for coffee, resulting in many stories about people, places, and events in the Strandveld. In addition, we visited the Agulhas Lighthouse, old farms, and graveyards in the region. Since 2006, my parents have lived on the Springfield farm in the Strandveld, which once belonged to one of my ancestors. Consequently, the tradition of stories about and visits to the Strandveld continues.

Usually, the word "strandveld" refers to the strip of vegetation along the beaches in the Western Cape. Chadbon (2020) describes Strandveld as an area with distinct biomes such

as Fynbos and Renosterveld in the Cape Floristic Region, an umbrella term for various plant habitats in the part of the Western Cape. However, the Strandveld is also a specific region in the Overberg on the south coast of the Western Cape (as seen in Figure 5.5), stretching from Waenhuiskrans (also known as Arniston) in the east to Rattel River in the west. Then, Napier is in the north, and Struis Bay and Agulhas are in the south, near the Southernmost point of South Africa and Africa.

Figure 5.5

Map of the Strandveld in the Overberg, Western Cape, drawn by my father, Piet van As (Van As, 2018)



You cannot disconnect stories about people from what happened to people and where things happened to people. In other words, the ethnographic part of doing an autoethnography. Therefore, stories about the Strandveld focused mainly on the people: family (especially those long gone), family friends, neighbours, and even foreigners who somehow made their way to the region. Most stories were about White, Afrikaans-speaking people, but these stories represented Afrikaners from different backgrounds, like poor White Afrikaners or middle-class and, in some cases, wealthy inhabitants. The stories represented farm owners, farm labourers, and people with regular jobs like builders, fishermen, traders and merchants.

Understanding Afrikaners is crucial; they were primarily descended from Dutch colonists in the Cape of Good Hope from the 1600s, with added influences from French Huguenots and German labourers (Hollfelder et al., 2020). Studies, such as by Hollfelder et al. (2020) and Philpott (2012), indicate a limited ancestral pool for Afrikaners, hinting at potential inbreeding. Nonetheless, Afrikaners also have non-European ancestries. Their complex heritage includes, among others, the Khoi, enslaved people, Coloured people, Jews, and Germans.

Disregarding the people's origin, race, and language, the stories told by my father were mainly about ordinary people and their way of life when people lived uncomplicated lives; however, the stories also captured hardship, loss, and camaraderie. The stories I grew up with captured traditions, daily routines, and how people visited each other back and forth. The stories in this cabinet of curiosities were intertwined with the histories of the local community, social dynamics, family experiences, and the broader regional context, with oral traditions playing a significant role in conveying these past narratives – from one generation to another, people talk to each other and share their memories from way back. The focus lies in gathering memories and personal narratives that hold historical significance.

Moreover, stories and storytelling can be quite emotional. People have used this method for centuries to understand the past, and it is still a way for regular people to get involved in making history. Social history is about studying regular people and how they lived their everyday lives. It is not only about famous people but also the unsung heroes and ordinary people we have often never heard of. It looks at how people, from families to whole nations, interact with each other, and it is often called the “history of the people” or “history from below” (Evans, n.d.). Social history has opened up new doors for academic research, like studying households, popular culture, and the struggles of the underprivileged. Family history is like digging into your family's past. It covers many things, like who your ancestors were, how they lived, and what they went through. It is a mixture of demographics, family life, traditions, and even gender and race relations within families.

Regional history, on the other hand, is about diving into a specific geographic area, in this case, the Strandveld. It is not just about the land and the people, but also about the culture, language, and how people interact with their surroundings. Regional history can help you understand the identity of a place and how it shaped its people. It is primarily unofficial history, sometimes even fiction, blending historical figures and events with made-up elements (Malatesta, 2019). It blurs the lines between actual history and imagination, mixing true events with fiction. In my father's stories, there are stories about shipwrecks (and consequent auctions), floods, church fêtes, murders, funerals, missing people, ghosts, scandals, and even involvement in the South African War (commonly known as the Anglo-Boer War), and World Wars 1 and 2. An example is the story about the goose, which my grandmother Rali donated to the church "basaar" (fête), only for my grandfather Koos to win it back in a target-shooting competition. There is another "basaar" story, although not from the same one, where the pigs ate the tarts which were left on the window sill to cool down at the church fête.

There were also abnormal and factional stories linked to national and global events, like the story about a man from Swellendam who was a representative for a prominent Cape Town company, and sold agricultural machines to the farmers in the Strandveld (names withheld), consequently becoming well-known to them. He was a German sympathiser during World War 2. While renting a room in Waenshuiskrans, which overlooked the sea, he sent radio signals to the Germans when he received word that a convoy of allied ships would pass Cape Agulhas. This led to the torpedoing of the Norwegian tanker *Storaas* and the American freighter *Agwimonte* by a German U-boat on the night of 28 May 1943 (Watt, 2019). Other ships were also torpedoed due to the intelligence received. Later, the German spy stopped his signals after the military police started to trace his signals. He fled to Buffeljags Mountain and sent signals from the mountain instead. After a chase, he was last spotted at Aasfontein. The story told was that other German sympathisers in the region were evacuated to a German U-boat using a rowing boat. The last anyone heard of him was his propaganda radio broadcast in Afrikaans from Berlin.

There were even stories about murders. For example, after a love triangle between a woman and two men in Struisbay in the late 1800s, the woman's husband disappeared. For years and years, nobody knew what had happened to him, and because he was never found, the woman could not remarry the man with whom she had had an affair. After many years, the husband was eventually found with the harpoon point still stuck in his chest in the 13th grave at Ouvadersbos, between Springfield and Rhenosterkop, now a ruin. It is still a mystery who was buried in the other 12 graves, which were much older than the 13th grave. Thus, some stories intricately wove suspense and the unknown through the rich tapestry of life.

One of the stories I grew up with was about my father, who went to Skipskop to help an elderly Coloured man, Hendrik Bantom, and his wife pick up their last belongings and leave their home for the last time in 1974. Skipskop was a small village town in Overberg, west of Arniston (Waenhuiskrans), which was named after several ships that were wrecked there. On their way out, they stopped on a hill overlooking Skipskop. The older man climbed out of the car to look back at their home for the last time. Tears rolled down his face. Hendrik's wife, who had stayed in the car, did not look back. This image is imprinted in my brain, and I recall it every time I hear the famous Afrikaans song "Skipskop", written by David Kramer in the early 1980s and made famous by both Kramer and Sonja Heroldt. I have goosebumps as I am now listening to the song again. In hindsight, it is one of the few songs (if not the only one) that was part of everyday listening music for Afrikaans people that somehow captured the horrors of apartheid and forced removals. These are the lyrics of the famous Afrikaans song "Skipskop", written by David:

Koor:

Maar wat ken ek anders

As die bloudam se branders

Die wolke en die winde

Wat hier waai

Verkoop jou bootjie

Pak op jou goedjies

Sê maar so long Skipskop

Skipskop sê goodbye

Choir:

But what can I do?

I am one with these blue waters,

I am the clouds and the winds that blow here,

But sell your little boat,

pack up your things,

And say so long Skipskop, Skipskop say goodbye,

And say so long Skipskop, Skipskop say goodbye

Note. [Link to the complete English translation.](#) [Link to the Sonja Heroldt rendition of Skipskop \(YouTube Video\)](#)

This song immortalised the injustice of uprooting a whole community, including Coloured and White people. The entire communities of Skipskop and Ryspunt and the many farms in the surrounding area were demolished and left desolate to make way for a new military test site needed by the apartheid regime (The Journalist, 2014).

Through stories like these, I was exposed to stories that transcended race and class. The Skipskop and Ryspunt forced removals differed from those in the rest of South Africa when the Group Areas Act was passed in April 1950 in South Africa (Ballim, 2023). According to Ballim (2023), based on the Group Areas Act, the notorious Group Areas Board presided over the forced removal of people from racially mixed districts in large cities and tiny rural towns across South Africa. For decades after 1950, racially segregated residential districts were created, which reserved the central business districts and modern infrastructure of urban areas for White people (Ballim, 2023; Larson, 2019). Townships were created for Black, Coloured, and Asian people (Larson, 2019). According to Ballim (2023), the forced removals that occurred in earnest during the 1970s and 1980s were brutal and deeply intrusive into the

lives of ordinary people. The fallout still persists today. For this reason, the Group Areas Act is still seen as one of the pillars of South Africa (Ballim, 2023).

We also grew up with stories related to indigenous knowledge. We learned that the rain was coming when ants scurried around the house, then a snake sailed, or a turtle walked. In addition, there would be a north-westerly (Kraaifontein) or westerly (Strandveld) wind. There would be blue bottles and a small ocean animal resembling a jellyfish on the beach and in the water after a few windy south-easterly days. A jellyfish sting is painful; fortunately, we learned what to do when stung. We learned how to fish. My father taught us what we could eat from the rock pools, like limpets and sea grass, although we opted for abalone and alikreukel (see Figure 5.6), my favourite to look for in the deeper rock pools. Unfortunately, these are now very hard to find due to the increase of poachers in the area.

Figure 5.6

Jaco and I posing with some alikreukel we harvested. It is ready to be boiled (photograph by Piet van As)



It was mainly under the guidance of my father that we visited old farms, ruins, shipwrecks, the Agulhas Lighthouse, graveyards, fish traps, and shell middens around Struis Bay, Cape Agulhas, Bredasdorp, and De Hoop. These visits are evident from the many photographs we still have of those years – some of which are included in Figure 5.7. As far as I remember, I was fascinated by the fish traps and shell middens created by indigenous people

in Agulhas, Rasperpunt, and Brandfontein. As a young girl, I only knew that people lived in the region, along the coast, a long time ago, before the Europeans came, and that they built the fish traps and were responsible for the shell middens. I later learned more about the Khoi and Strandlopers (beachcombers) who had built these fish traps. According to Reid (2020), ingeniously built Stone Age Khoi tidal fish traps are revealed when the tide goes out. The Khoi constructed dams by packing rocks to create shallow gullies to entrap fish as the tide went out. Some of these fish traps were used until the 1980s when local people still looked after the makeshift rock walls of the fish traps and caught fish in this traditional way. In addition, not far from where my parents now live on Springfield farm, near the old yard of Rhenosterkop, we once went to look for tiny ostrich shell beads created by the Strandlopers and Khoi between former dunes that are now overgrown with local fynbos. Furthermore, often, when we walk between the dunes near Brandfontein, we find old pot shards. Initially, my father was the exhibition leader. Later, we could venture independently, especially to the beach and the dunes. Of all the children, Heine, my youngest brother, did this most often.

Figure 5.7

Photographs of places we visited in the Strandveld over the years



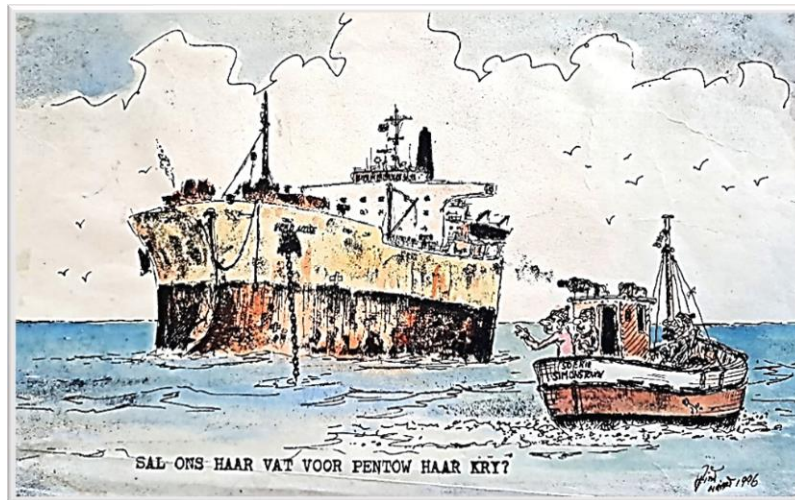
Note. These photographs show me in front of the shipwreck of the Japanese *Meisho Maru* No. 38 that was stranded in 1982 just outside Agulhas; my father, Jaco, and I in front of the old farmhouse my great-grandfather built on Soetendalsvlei in 1906; fish traps between Brandfontein and Aasfontein; Jaco and I in the Bredasdorp graveyard. I took a photograph of the fish traps. The other photographs were taken either by my father or my mother.

Although my father primarily told his stories orally (he is a storyteller at heart), he wrote a few poems (unpublished until recently), letters to family and friends, and sometimes short stories for the local Strandveld newspapers, *Suidernuus* and *Twee Oseane*, and stories for monthly newsletters like the *Erfenis Heritage* and *Agulhas Park eBulletin*. Each poem, letter, newspaper and newsletter story tells a story about a person, a place, or an event. In addition, as seen in Figure 5.8, my father draws sketches to memorialise, visualise, and colourise a story, usually about daily or strange events. This story and drawing is about an old cargo ship

that needed assistance along the Southern Cape coast, but local fishermen were there before the salvage team arrived.

Figure 5.8

“Will we take her before Pentow finds her?” A sketch by Piet van As, March 1996 (translation Adrienne van As)



My father corresponded with renowned South African author Dalene Matthee³ from 1988 – first by letter, using an old typewriter, and later by email. He told her about the Strandveld and its people in all the letters and emails. Although Matthee greatly encouraged my father to write his stories, these stories inspired her to write her last novel, *Die Uitgespoeldes* (2005a) (only published after Matthee passed away in February 2005; also published in English as *Driftwood*). This historical novel is full of my father’s stories and illustrations that Matthee wove together to write the story of Moses, Lord and Lady de Saumarez of Springfield farm, and several other people from the area, like one of those traditional quilts with different patches and materials. The story is summarised on the back cover of the novel as follows:

³ Dalene Matthee (1938–2005) was a prominent South African author who primarily wrote in Afrikaans. Her works were translated into fourteen languages, including English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, and Icelandic. She authored a collection of short stories called *Die Judasbok* and several novels, including *Circles in a Forest* and *The Mulberry Forest* (The University of Chicago Press, n.d.).

Early in the twentieth century, a four-year-old boy is washed ashore like a piece of driftwood at Rietfontein Bay in the Southern Cape. Plucked from amongst the drowned bodies and the wreckage of the ship, which floundered on the rocky reefs, the child is adopted by Willem and Sanna Swart and is given the name Moses. More than fifty years later, Moses spends his days caring for a flock of sheep, continually haunted by a sense of displacement and a yearning to know his real identity. When he goes to work as a gardener for the elderly Lord and Lady de Saumarez, he begins to feel a sense of belonging for the first time, and the missing pieces of his life start to unravel. Dalene Matthee, in this her final work, has created a moving tale of identity lost and found. (Matthee, 2005b, back cover)

After the launch of Matthee's (2005a) book, *Die Uitgespoeldes*, my father was a speaker at many gatherings, book launches, and book clubs, which gave him the opportunity to share his stories and his journey with Matthee while she wrote the novel. In addition, many articles in newspapers and magazines mentioned my father's role; for example, an extensive article was published in *Die Burger* on Saturday, 24 September 2023 (See Figure 5.9), emphasising my father's role as a storyteller.

Figure 5.9

Newspaper article about Piet van As (Botha, 2005), published in Die Burger, Saturday, 24 September 2005

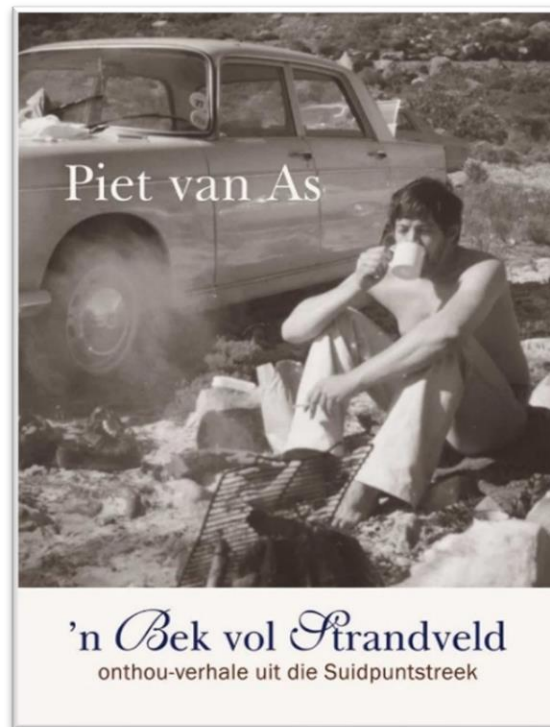


Matthee was not the only famous writer inspired by my father's stories. More recently, South African and Afrikaans author Chanette Paul (Paul, 2022) published a historical novel with a modern twist. *Murasie* (meaning ruins) highlights Strandveld's stories, regional words, and expressions. The story of the fictional farm Verlatenfontein is loosely based on the farm, Ratel River, and the historical events that happened there – these are the stories that I grew up with.

Finally, with the help of a few benefactors, my father published some of his stories in Afrikaans in 2018, in *'n Bek vol Strandveld – Onthou-verhale uit die Suidpuntstreek* (loosely translated in English as *A mouth-full of Strandveld – Remember-stories from the South Point region*) (see Figure 5.10). Now, my father is not a writer. He is a storyteller. However, a team who worked on the book gathered the stories, poems, and letters that he wrote over many years. The book is filled with stories that I knew and heard often. I am proud to say that I designed the cover page and wrote the biography, which is featured at the end of the book.

Figure 5.10

Cover page of *'n Bek vol Strandveld*, my father's first book (Van As, 2018)



The book consists of two parts: first, stories and poems, and second, letters to some of his friends. The stories and poems in the first part of the book have several themes: events, people, places, love and loss, and ghost stories⁴. For example, the poem “Brandfontein 1880”, still typed on an old typewriter (see Figure 5.11), is about the funeral of Maria Elizabeth Swart, the first wife of my great-grandfather, Hendrik Johannes van As. This funeral was at Brandfontein around 1880 (Van As, 2018, p. 107). All translations of the passages quoted from the Afrikaans version are my own.

⁴ The only time ever that I was called to the principal's office was due to a ghost story I retold (the one in the woodwork classroom).

Figure 5.11

Poem by my father, Piet van As, about Brandfontein and a funeral in 1880 (English translation by Adrienne van As)

BRANDFONTEIN

Die kis sak stadig aan osriem af
In 'n nuut-gegrawe seekant graf
Op die werf van 'n Strandveld-plaas
Waar branders durig eenkant raas
'n Kind wat ween en klaar verlang
Deur die wind gekla en psalmsang

Die preek waai weg oor werf en bos
Oor duin en seekrans bruin met mos
'n Meeu hang en van bo af kyk
Na almal swart uit die hele wyk
Eenkant jonges met skoon gesig
Krom die oues skeef met jig

Grys oor die berg pak die koue saam
Oor al die rouers wat huis toe gaan
Oor die wat fluister wonder en sê
Van haar wat nou tot lank daar lê
En hy met kispak hoog in die saal
Om sy nuwe Maria op Soutbos te haal

BRANDFONTEIN

The coffin slowly descends on an ox strap
In a newly dug seaside grave
On the site of a Strandveld farm
Where waves roar on one side
A child who cries and longs
Lamented by the wind and psalm singing

The sermon blows away over yard and forest
Over dune and sea cliff brown with moss
A seagull hand and look from above
After all, black from the whole ward
Crooked parents with gout

Gray over the mountain packs the stocking together
About all the mourners going home
About those who whisper wonder and say
From her because now until long lay there
And you with a coffin high in the hall
To fetch his new Maria on Soutbos

The letters in the second part of the book are to the famous Afrikaans writers Dalene Matthee, Pieter Pieterse, Jan and S. D. Fourie, Amanda Botha, George Weideman, and local and former Agulhas National Park employee, Emmerentia de Kock. It is evident in the extract from a letter (see Figure 5.12) to Dalene Matthee, dated Friday, 28 May 1998 (Van As, 2018, p. 131), that my father loved stories but also took time to listen, find out more about people and events, and share them.

Figure 5.12

Extract of a letter from my father to Dalene Matthee, dated Friday, 28 May 1998 (English translation by Adrienne van As)

*Kom kry die winter ons so stuk-stuk en
is my dae gans te kort vir al die dinge wat
gedoen moet word. Met Katy Nosterkop nog
altyd op haar laaste probeer ons om elke*

*Winter is coming to get us piece by
piece, and my days are way too short for
everything that needs to be done. With Katy
Nosterkop always at her last, we try to make a*

naweek daar 'n draai te maak en gebruik ek sulke tye om my ou voormense en hul dinge op papier te kry. Neem ek foto's en maak sketse en probeer ou-ou stories uit die ou mense kry en waar iemand oor 'n storie steeks raak, voer ek hom of haar met witblits wat ek by Koos Boor gekry het. Maak ek dan 'n draai by 'n klomp dinge voor ek na die "verbode" gebeurtenis terugkom ... en dit werk. So kom ek af op die twee Robertson-meisies wat doer in 1895 by Brandfontein verdrink het en my oupa Piet se broer Hendrik se verbintenis met daardie gebeurtenis. Die twee grafte is somer langs grootoupa Hendrik se hopie klippe, maar die grafskrifte het jare terug al verdwyn. Kan 'n mens daarvandaan 'n klip in die see gooi.

trip there every weekend, and I use such times to get my old ancestors and their things on paper. I take pictures, make sketches, and try to get old-old stories from older people, and when someone gets stuck on a story, I feed him or her with white lightning that I got from Koos Boor. I then visit many things before returning to the "forbidden" event... and it works. That is how I came across the two Robertson girls who drowned at Brandfontein in 1895 and my grandfather Piet's brother Hendrik's connection to that event. The two graves are right next to great-grandfather Hendrik's pile of stones, but the epitaphs disappeared years ago. Can one throw a stone into the sea from there.

Stories primarily told by men often emphasise male perspectives and experiences and can be male-centric. Such stories tend to focus on male characters and their viewpoints, sometimes overlooking or downplaying the experiences and perspectives of female characters. However, in my father's stories, women still play a prominent role. My mother often highlights that the history of her family and where she comes from plays second fiddle. However, throughout the years (due to the unconscious influence of our family dynamics and the focus on the past in various ways), her interest in her family history has increased, leading her to organise her old family photographs and create a scrapbook that focuses on various of her family members, like her father, mother, and her grandparents, and elements of her past.

Stories and Visits Outside the Strandveld

Even though Kraaifontein, outside Cape Town, was established when farmland was subdivided in the area in 1869 (Century 21, 2023), the part of Kraaifontein where I grew up, just north of the national road, the N1, was only developed in the 1970s. Consequently, the world I grew up in was relatively young and far removed from the Strandveld and its rich history and heritage. It was far from where my where my father grew up. With its urban layout, where

we only knew our close neighbours and had no family nearby, we knew nothing about Kraaifontein's past (except that there used to be a real zoo in Zoo Park).

While living in Kraaifontein (31 km from Cape Town), we visited Cape Town often. Cape Town was our closest city, with its majestic mountain on one side and the ocean on the other. In Cape Town, you can encounter the past in many forms and shapes. You can see some of the most beautiful old historical buildings. When you look down, you walk on old cobblestones. In the Golden Acre, you can go down to one of the lower levels and see some of the excavations of the original water canals – this gives you an idea of how the ground levels have changed (it is not only in older cities like Rome, where this happened). You can still see the flower market next to Adderley Street.

Furthermore, you can still hear the noon gun every day. Almost every corner in Cape Town has a museum, monument, statue, or older building, and every street name somehow connects the present to the past. As you drive or walk down Adderley Street, you can see the statues of well-known White leaders and other prominent role players. At the top of Adderley Street (in front of the former Slave Lodge) are the statues of General Jan Smuts⁵, Jan and Maria van Riebeeck⁶, the Cenotaph War Memorial⁷ and Bartholomeus Dias⁸. Statues of Queen Victoria⁹ and Cecil John Rhodes¹⁰ are in the Company Gardens. The plaque on the

⁵ Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870–1950) successfully led troops against Britain in the South African War. Smut later commanded the South African Defence Force fighting alongside British soldiers in several World War 1 campaigns. Smuts served as Prime Minister of South Africa from 1919 until 1924 (Museum., n.d.)

⁶ Jan van Riebeeck (1619–1677) was a Dutch colonial administrator who served as the first commander of the Cape Colony from 1652, establishing it as a refreshment station for the DEIC. Maria van Riebeeck (1629–1664), his wife, played a supportive role in the early days of the colony, particularly in the management of their household and interactions with the indigenous Khoikhoi people (Ströh, 2019b).

⁷ The Cenotaph War Memorial cenotaph was erected in 1924 to commemorate those South Africans who fell in WW1. Plaques have been added for WW2 and Korea (Kadesh, 2023).

⁸ Bartholomeus Dias led an expedition in 1487 with the caravel *São Pantateão* and another cargo ship, seeking a sea route to India. Dias sailed east around the Cape of Good Hope but was forced to turn back due to resistance from his crew who were unwilling to continue the journey (Ströh, 2019a)

⁹ Queen Victoria (1819–1901) was the Queen regnant of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 20 June 1837 until her death. Her statue was erected in 1890 to mark her 1887 Golden Jubilee (City of Cape Town, n.d.).

¹⁰ Cecil John Rhodes (1853–1902) was a British-born South African statesman and Prime Minister of Cape Colony (1890–1896). Rhodes came to South Africa in 1870, where he became a successful diamond prospector. Twenty years later, Rhodes owned 90 per cent of the world's production of diamonds (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

Rhodes statue still reads: “Your hinterland lies here” and is, strangely, still intact. His statue at the University of Cape Town was removed after the #RhodesMustFall campaign and student protests in 2015. On the Grand Parade, opposite the Cape Town City Hall, is the South African War (Anglo-Boer War) Memorial¹¹ and a statue of King Edward VII¹². In front of Parliament on Roeland Street is a statue of General Louis Botha on a horse¹³. There are also other statues. With all these statues, one can almost tell the South African story.

The Castle of Good Hope was one of the places in Cape Town we frequently visited, either as a family or as part of a school group. It is also one of the main symbols in Cape Town that reminds us of our colonial past, resulting in a broader and more traditional, nationalist view of the past than that of the Strandveld. The Dutch East India Company (DEIC) first set up a fort when tasked to set up a maritime replenishment station under the shadow of Table Mountain. However, in 1664, there were renewed rumours of war between Britain and the Netherlands; consequently, Wagenaer (who succeeded Van Riebeeck as the commander in 1662) ordered the build of a five-pointed stone castle similar to such fortifications in Europe and the East (Castle of Good Hope, 2021). The Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, built between 1666 and 1679, is the oldest surviving colonial building in South Africa and the current military seat in the Cape (Tomas, 2020). Of course, enslaved people, Khoikhoi, sailors, burghers, and company workers built the castle from building materials found in the area (Ras, as cited in Castle of Good Hope, 2021). The castle held a church, bakery, workshops, living quarters (especially for the soldiers), offices, cells, a pool, a well (which used to be at the centre of the courtyard), a granary, and numerous other facilities. As a result, the Cape Colony became a thriving settlement for military personnel and civilians alike (Tomas, 2020). The dark hole, a small, windowless dungeon inside the castle, always held some fascination for me.

¹¹ The South African War (1899–1902), also known as the Anglo-Boer War, was fought between the British Empire and the two Boer states, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State (Sangster, 2013).

¹² King Edward VII (1841–1910) was the eldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He became the Prince of Wales in 1841 and King Edward VII in 1901 (The Royal Household, n.d.).

¹³ Generaal Louis Botha (1862–1919) became a prominent figure in South African politics during the South African War (1899–1902). Later, Botha served as the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (Imperial War Museum, 2023).

Yes, it is dark. Only recently did I discover that the dark hole was not used as a dungeon. Instead, it was used as an ammunition store and gunpowder magazine for a while. However, it was too damp for gunpowder and was later used as a coal store. Another fascination is that the beach used to be next to the castle. It is not easy to imagine this when you stand on the Catzenellenbogen bastion since there is now more than a kilometre of land between the castle and the ocean.

I have visited the Castle a few times during the last few years. Before the film *Krotoa* was made in and around Springfield, the farm where my parents live, my father, Heine, and I explored the castle for Heine to get inspiration and ideas. In the film, Krotoa, a Khoi girl, is taken to the first fort, established in 1652 by the DEIC (Penguin Films, 2016). Here, Krotoa (also known as Eva) became a visionary young woman who understood the Dutch language and culture so well that she became an influential interpreter for Van Riebeeck, the first commander of the Cape Colony. However, Krotoa was rejected by her Khoi people and destroyed by the Dutch when she tried to find a middle ground between the two cultures. On the movie set, Heine worked in the art department and was responsible for building the replica of the first fort, a building that used to be where the Grand Parade is today, opposite the castle. My last visit there was with friends to attend a ceramic exhibition.

The National Museum and the old Company Gardens still have old trees, squirrels, rats, pathways, and statues. One of my first memories of the National Museum, right at the top of the Company Gardens, is of the first gallery dedicated to the Khoi and the San. Almost in the middle of the first room used to be a glass case with the skeleton of a Strandloper in a sitting position. My father and a friend discovered this skeleton while fishing at Waenkuiskrans. In the meantime, the human remains were rightfully removed from the museum's exhibitions.

The Cape Minstrels used to have an annual festival in the streets of Cape Town on 2 January to commemorate the emancipation of the enslaved people. According to Gibson (2013), during the Christmas and New Year festivities in Cape Town, three interconnected musical events occur: the Malay Choirs, Christmas Bands, and Minstrels (Klopse). Historically, the Klopse emerged from a blend of colonial New Year and Christmas celebrations and the

celebration of slave emancipation on 1 December 1834, which later evolved into a series of New Year festivities.

According to my mother (M.M. van As, personal communication, September 23, 2023), while living in Green Point, we looked down onto Somerset Road, viewing the parade of all the troupes from the apartment building. Later, while living in Kraaifontein, we travelled into town, parked the car where we found an available parking bay and walked to where we could find a spot on the route. One year, for example, we stood on the corner of Darling and Plein Street in Cape Town (see Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13

A photograph of a family outing to see the Cape Minstrels



Note. Left: Jaco, me, my mother, and Heine in the stroller, waiting for the Cape Minstrels to arrive. Right: A minstrel troupe is passing by (Piet van As took the photographs). [Link to a recording video of the 2018 Cape Minstrels](#) (De Kock, 2018)

To understand the heritage of the Cape Minstrels, it is necessary to understand the socio-historical and political context in which the festival originated. More than a century ago, The Second New Year Carnival was established. However, its social roots are intertwined with the history of colonial slavery at the Cape, which began in 1652 when DEIC officials arrived at the Cape of Good Hope. Since then, around 63 000 individuals from Africa, India and

Indonesia were brought to the Cape as enslaved people (Fourie, 2020). Many of them were born into servitude. Their roles mainly involved labour, domestic service, farming, and craftsmanship. Even though slavery was officially abolished by the British in 1808, it continued to exist in the Cape until 1834. Freed individuals then became apprentices until 1838 to facilitate their transition into freedom. As a result of their backgrounds and experiences as enslaved people, a unique society emerged in the Cape.

The celebrations held in 1834 and 1838 included street parades and music performances. The liberated people formed tightly-knit communities and established traditions that paved the way for better futures for their descendants. One notable legacy is seen in the dance bands of the century, which later transformed into minstrel acts influenced by American minstrelsy. Participants dressed up in uniforms. They marched to music, laying the foundations for what would eventually become a significant part of Cape Town's New Year festival. The carnival changed due to the 1951 apartheid Group Areas Act, which limited access to gathering spots. Government interventions and evolving tastes led to alterations in costumes and the inclusion of brass bands alongside traditional string bands.

The Cape Town harbour of my childhood vastly differed from the harbour we know today – it was dirty, smelly, and windy. It was only much later that the harbour transformed. The first hotel and shops opened. After that, there was the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront. As a family, with my father taking the lead, we visited the harbour for unique visits, like the replica *HMS Bounty* in 1987 or just walking around and using the *Penny Ferry* (see Figure 5.14). Usually, these ships were berthed in areas accessible to the public. Sometimes, we drove to the harbour to pick up or drop off my father. In the very early years, before I can remember, my mother also went to the ship to do our washing (her washing machine had broken). The harbour also had a sentimental connection: my mother and father first met while the *R. S. A.* was berthed next to the Collier Jetty in the Victoria Basin.

Figure 5.14

Family photographs taken at Cape Town Harbour



Note. On the left-hand side, my mother, grandmother, and grandfather are on the *Penny Ferry*, named after the ferry that used to cost a penny. We used this ferry to cross the entrance to the Alfred Basin, the Robinson Dry Dock (built in 1882), the old boat repair slip, and the new marina. On the right-hand side, Jaco and I in front of the replica of the *HMS Bounty* (photographs by Piet van As)

The harbour was central to many other stories, broader than those of our local and national history, that my father told us through the years. From here, he travelled far and wide as part of the South African Navy and later as a ship engineer. According to my father (P.A. van As, personal communication, September 23, 2023), he travelled to Australia in 1968 on the *SAS President Pretorius* for a goodwill visit to Freemantle, Melbourne, Sydney, and then back to Melbourne. He also travelled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1971 and 1973 on the *SAS Tafelberg*. In 1972, the same ship travelled to Angola to escort South Africa's first U-boat, *Johanna van der Merwe*, en-route to Simonstown. From 1975 to 1981, he worked on research vessels *R. S. A.* and *Agulhas I*. During these years, he visited Antarctica, Gough Island, Marion Island, and Trista da Cunha Island.

Later, while working for the oil pollution section of the Department of Transport's Marine Division, my father's work store was opposite the harbour for many years (see Figure 5.15). We often went to visit during the school holidays. First, we ran to the fence to pick up pink stones (rose quartz), just in case they fell to our side of the fence. Then, we drove up and down the passageways on the forklift. Above all (and one of the highlights of our visits), we drank my father's condensed milk from the tin. Back then, I did not realise the significance of the stone wall on the harbour side of the parking lot, even though I knew it was of some archaeological significance due to some archaeological excavations from time to time. It was the back wall of the Amsterdam Battery, one of the original defence stations of the Cape of Good Hope.

Figure 5.15

The store where my father worked when I grew up with the back wall of the Amsterdam Battery in the foreground (Photograph by Piet van As).



The reader must note that several contemporary museums represent a more balanced view of the past than when I was a child. The District Six Museum was launched in December 1994 to memorialise the forced displacement of 60 000 residents of various races in District Six in Cape Town during apartheid in South Africa in the 1970s (International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, 2009). As a result, thousands of people lived far from their work and Cape Town and often far from family and friends. Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela and many

other political prisoners were held, was still a prison until 1991 (my Standard 4 year), when the last prisoners were released, and the prison formally closed in 1996 (International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights, 2023). The Bo-Kaap Museum, also in Cape Town, is situated in the historic area of Cape Town that became home to many Muslims and freed enslaved people after the abolition of slavery, highlighting local Islamic culture and heritage. Although the Bo-Kaap Museum had already opened in April 1978, the year before I was born, I visited the Bo-Kaap Museum, as well as Robben Island and the District Six Museums, only after my school years, either due to college excursions or as a result of my father's work (for example, we went to catch penguins on Robben Island after a severe oil spill in 2000).

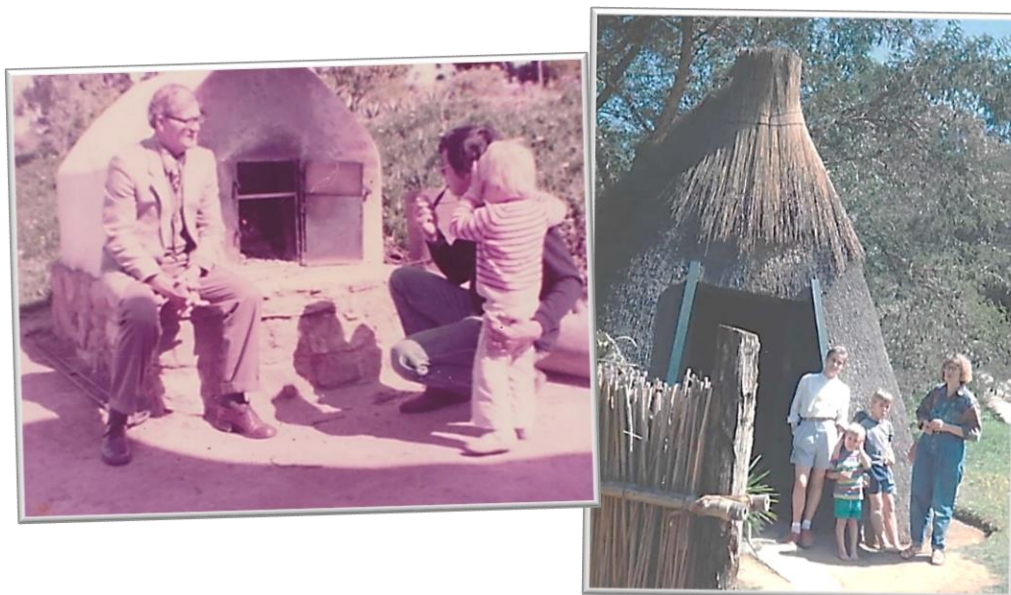
It was not strange for us to drive around and visit places around Kraaifontein. Around us, several towns, like Paarl, Stellenbosch, Franschhoek, Worcester, Wolseley, and even a bit further away, had a rich history with museums, monuments, old buildings, and many stories. In addition, there are several old farms. Although I have highlighted Kleinplasia in Worcester and the Huguenot Museum in Franschhoek below, my unofficial history education was also captured by visiting places like the Afrikaans Language Monument just outside Paarl a few times and visits to other towns and farms.

Among others, *Kleinplasia* in Worcester was a popular destination, especially considering the number of photographs of our visits – we visited Kleinplasia many times (see Figure 5.16) and also had a school excursion once. Kleinplasia is an open-air museum or, in other words, a cultural heritage village with a strong focus on agriculture. More specifically, an open-air museum is an extension of a cultural history museum where a cultural history collection is placed within a new, vibrant space, showcasing part of the nation's scientific, historical, and cultural heritage or a group of people (Jonas, 2012). The idea behind Kleinplasia was for the past to come alive – and it did. I remember the donkey, Sofie, a zonkie (a mix between donkeys and zebra), which only passed away in December 2020. I remember my father tasting too much witblits (moonshine), a clear spirit distilled in South Africa for many years. I remember the smell of baked bread and the distinct, earthy smell of the interior of the

old thatch-roofed buildings. I remember how they made traditional candles and baked bread in the outside oven. I remember we visited Kleinplasia once after driving to Ceres to see the snow. The only thing I remember of the visit to Kleinplasia on a school trip was that Sunita, a school friend, bought a block of fudge from the museum shop, only to realise later that it was boereseep (farmer's soap). The frequent visits to Kleinplasia reinforced our cultural history and Afrikaner heritage, making us remember where we came from since the Afrikaner Nationalists, once in power after 1948, set about establishing a White national identity for South Africa by re-establishing links with a shared colonial past (Augustyn-Clark, 2017). The apartheid state was a crucial curator in the redefinition of the nation's history and heritage. There is little doubt that the invocation of numerous cultural symbols, like Kleinplasia in Worcester, affirmed the Afrikaner identity and contributed to this cultural identity.

Figure 5.16

Photographs taken at Kleinplasia in Worcester



Note. On the left, Oupa Spies, my father, and I are in front of a traditional baking oven. On the right, Heine, Jaco, my mother, and I are standing in front of the replica of a kapstyl house (photographs by Marie or Piet van As)

As children, we often visited Franschoek. Today, Franschoek is very different from how it was back in the 1980s and even the 1990s. In contemporary Franschoek, the main road is buzzing with tourists, shops, and restaurants. In the past, when I was a child, it was quiet; there were no tourists, and I cannot remember that we did much. We used to stop at one unusual shop: it was set up like an old general dealer with everything you can imagine. It was like stepping back in time – almost like a time travel machine taking you back to a world that no longer exists. Upon leaving, one could almost expect to see horse carriages in the street again. I also cannot remember much about our visit to the Huguenot Monument. However, at the bottom of the main road, we always saw the Huguenot Monument. When I was growing up, we learned that our family’s heritage consists mainly of Dutch, German, and French descendants. From the French side, we are, among others, descendants of first-generation immigrants, Rousseau, Terblanche, and Theron French Huguenots (see Figure 5.17).

Figure 5.17

Look in the mirror: We are descendants of the French Huguenots



Note. I took this photograph of my mother and me during a recent visit to the French Huguenot Museum in Franschoek.

The Huguenot Memorial Museum tells the story of South Africa’s French Huguenots in the context of the global refugee phenomenon of the time (Huguenot Memorial Museum,

n.d.). However, due to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV, Huguenot persecutions continued and drove an exodus of Protestants to other countries in Europe, England, and America, increasing the hostility of Protestant nations bordering France. For this reason, the following extract from a poem, "Home", by Warsan Shire, a contemporary Somali-British writer and poet (Gupta, 2022), is written on a wall at the Huguenot Museum:

I want to go home
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of a gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hungry
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important

As many refugees fled to the Netherlands, the then-commander of the Cape, Simon van der Stel, requested that the French refugees be sent to the Cape. As farmers, they would have been able to help with food production for the passing ships and to help when there were any British attacks (Huguenote Stigting, n.d.). The mainstream Huguenot settlers arrived in the Cape Colony in 1688 and 1699 without many belongings (Huguenote Stigting, n.d.). The Huguenot Monument, completed in 1943 and unveiled in 1948, represents the culmination of many efforts to commemorate the French Huguenots.

Stories and Visits Outside the Western Cape

In addition, we visited places with historical significance outside the Western Cape, although less often and depending on where and why we travelled. For example, since my mother's parents lived in Pretoria, we visited the city often. During the visits to Pretoria, we went to the Voortrekker Monument, the National Museum of Cultural History (now part of the Ditsong Museums of South Africa), and the Union Buildings, the official seat of the South African government and the offices of the President of South Africa (built between 1910 and 1913). Of these, the Voortrekker Monument is the most prominent and the most essential symbol of Afrikaner history (Van Vollenhoven, 2014). The Voortrekker Monument was erected between 1937 and 1949, and the cornerstone was laid on 16 December 1938 (Grobler, 2001, as cited in Van Vollenhoven, 2014). Since the completion and inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949, it has been a source of debate and has managed to evoke strong emotions among South Africans from all walks of life (Kruger & Van Heerden, 2005). According to Kruger and Van Heerden (2005), the Voortrekker Monument, just south of Pretoria, is an example of a monument constructed to mark a historical event, the Great Trek of 1835 to 1852. Therefore, the Voortrekker Monument commemorates the approximately 20 000 people who migrated from the Cape Colony into the interior of Southern Africa (Kruger & Van Heerden, 2005; Heymans, 1986, as cited in Van Vollenhoven, 2014). The monument's architecture is imposing and unique, and the marble frieze is one of the largest in the world. The Voortrekker Monument and the part of the past of South Africa it represents has played a significant role in the cultural history of the Afrikaners and also significantly influenced the lives of many other individuals from other cultural groups in Southern Africa (Kruger & Van Heerden, 2005) (see Figure 5.18).

Figure 5.18

Some of our visits outside the Western Cape



Note. Pilgrim's Rest in Mpumalanga, the Union Buildings in Pretoria, and traditional isiXhosa homesteads in the Eastern Cape (photographs taken by Marie or Piet van As)

Furthermore, we visited other significant historical sites along our routes, like the Big Hole in Kimberley, the traditional mining town of Pilgrim's Rest in Mpumalanga, Gold Reef City in Johannesburg, the Magersfontein Battlefield Museum (close to Kimberley), and traditional isiXhosa homesteads in the Eastern Cape where we were greeted with song and dance. These few photographs and a few other places we visited represent a unique collection of my experiences of the past outside the Strandveld and the Western Cape.

First, the Big Hole in Kimberley was one of the first diamond mines in Kimberley during the 19th century. Diamonds were discovered in Kimberley after Erasmus Jacobs found a transparent rock on his father's farm in the Northern Cape of South Africa in 1867 on Colesberg Hill (Macfarlane, 2019). According to Macfarlane (2019), once word was out after the first significant strike occurred in 1868, prospectors and entrepreneurs descended upon

the area, one of whom was Cecil John Rhodes in 1870, leading to the diamond rush in 1871, when Johannes and Diederik de Beer bought the Vooruitsig farm. The farm site became the Big Hole and the De Beers Mine. On the other hand, Pilgrim's Rest (close to my Aunt Ina, who lives in White River, Mpumalanga) was established after the 19th-century gold rush, dating back to 1873 when Alec Patterson started panning for gold in Pilgrim's Creek. The region has been a continuous source of gold since its discovery in 1872. In Johannesburg, Gold Reef City offers a heritage tour that provides insights into Johannesburg's gold rush history, including its founding and the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand reef. At the Big Hole in Kimberley, Pilgrim's Rest, and to a certain degree at Gold Reef City, you get a glimpse of the past in their re-enactments of what it used to look like; however, it is one-sided and unrepresentative, showing a nostalgic version of the past.

The only battle site I have ever visited was where the Battle of Magersfontein occurred near Kimberley as part of the South African War. On 11 December 1899, British forces led by Lieutenant General Lord Methuen suffered a defeat at the hands of the Boers commanded by Generals Cronje and De la Rey. The battle's significance stemmed from Methuen's unawareness of the Boers' change in strategy, positioning their troops at the foot of the hills instead of the expected forward slopes. This battle marked a pivotal moment during "Black Week" in the South African War, a period of severe losses and setbacks for the British forces.

With stories about people, places, and events, and visits to places with historical significance, there will always be a distance between the historian (or, in this case, me) and the events or people they are studying, mainly due to the temporal distance.

Conclusion to Growing Up With History

When I reflect on the narratives shared by my father and our family visits, I am struck not only by the varying temporal gaps between me and the people, places, and events described but also by the influence of language, cultures, and potential personal biases on my perception of these experiences. The past has been a constant companion, taking on different forms as I journeyed through it. My father's world was initially conveyed through captivating

stories and tangible visits, introducing me to a rich tapestry of historical narratives. Later, it became Cape Town and its surroundings, immersing me in a more colonial, traditional, and nationalist historical context of that era.

Despite the geographic proximity, temporal distances have always existed, making the past feel simultaneously near and far. These historical narratives, familial and regional, have shaped my understanding of history and influenced how I have interpreted not only my family's heritage and culture but also the cultures and histories of others. When considering the various dimensions of historical literacy, it might appear that only historical content knowledge was cultivated during these formative years. However, as I engaged in more dialogues and explorations, other dimensions of historical understanding evolved. Concepts such as historical consciousness, historical language, and source analysis were informally developed, laying a solid foundation for future growth.

The collection of historical narratives of this first cabinet represents a treasure trove of diverse perspectives on history. These stories encompass personal anecdotes, regional histories, and even national narratives, offering a multifaceted view of the past.

The history of people, societies, and cultures breathes life into bygone times and places. However, the peculiar and unique stories often endure the test of time. The stories and visits to the Strandveld region were deeply rooted in oral, family, social, cultural, and unofficial history. By contrast, the stories and visits beyond the Strandveld focused more on regional history and Afrikaner Nationalism.

When exploring historical narratives and visiting places of historical significance, a gap inevitably exists between the historian (in this case, me) and the events or individuals studied. Temporal factors do not solely define this gap but are also influenced by language, culture, and potential personal biases. Consequently, it shapes how I perceive and comprehend the past, encompassing my family's heritage and the histories and cultures beyond my own.

When I consider the various dimensions of historical literacy, it may seem that only historical content knowledge was nurtured during my early years. However, as dialogue and interaction increased, other dimensions, such as conceptual understanding, source analysis,

historical consciousness, and the informal use of historical language, also began to develop, laying a solid foundation for their further growth.

The theory of transactional distance remains relevant when examining my first cabinet of curiosity. The structure of these early experiences was characterised by low transactional distance, as storytelling and family visits facilitated close engagement with historical narratives. Throughout my upbringing, dialogue played a crucial role as it formed the basis of storytelling and learning. While dialogic interaction was limited during my earliest years due to my inability to communicate effectively, it gradually increased as I engaged with my father (mainly in a smaller group), mother, other adults, and later, my younger brothers, Jaco and Heine. These dialogues allowed for asking questions, pondering the reasons behind events, and sharing emotions, which led to acquiring knowledge, understanding, and developing higher-order thinking skills. Much like structure, autonomy was initially low during my early childhood when my father's role was as the storyteller who drove us around to visit people and places. However, my autonomy increased as I became more familiar with historical places of significance and engaged in dialogic interaction.

In summary, the stories of and the visits to the Strandveld primarily related to family, local, and social history, whereas those outside the Strandveld encompassed a broader spectrum, delving into the history of the Western Cape (including colonial history) and the national narrative. The diversity of these historical narratives shaped my perspective on history and contributed to my growth as a historian.

Second Cabinet of Curiosity: Sitting Behind the Desk

My Second Cabinet Of Curiosity

This second cabinet of Curiosity focuses on my lived school history experiences and teacher training years. Luckily, I kept many of my school workbooks (see Figure 5.19), including my History and Art History workbooks, which helped me to revisit and explore my past and helped me remember what we learned, how history was taught, how we were assessed, and the impact of the whole experience on my understanding of history and history

education. In addition, to enhance my understanding, I looked back to my school days through the lens of transactional and historical distances.

Figure 5.19

Some of my History and Art History workbooks



Note. I was able to revisit my History and Art History workbooks for this research. In this section of the second cabinet, I refer to many examples from the first book in the row, my Standard 3 History workbook.

School History

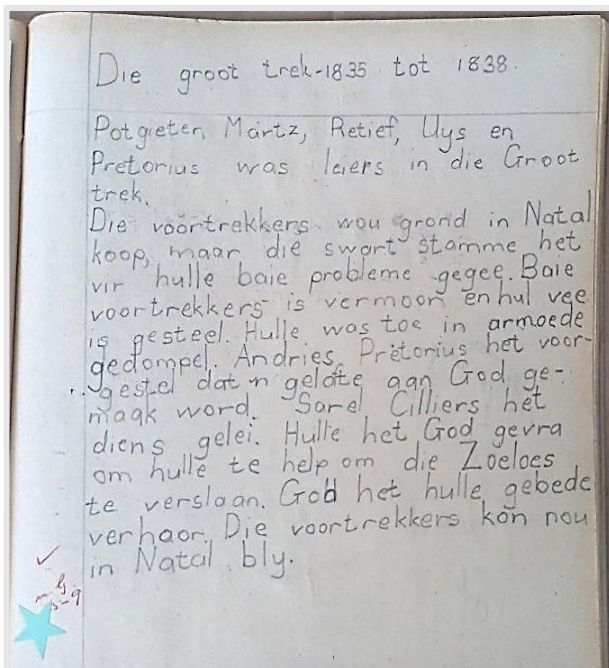
Even though History was only compulsory from Standard 2, we were already exposed to a small amount of history in Sub A, Sub B, and Standard 1. Owing to many similarities, despite the differences in content and educators, I mainly focused on examples from my Standard 3 workbook with a few references to other grades. To a large degree, this standard is representative of my experiences with the other standards.

In the two examples I included (see Figures 5.20 and 5.21), the focus was very much on the history of the Afrikaners and an Afrikaner Nationalist historiography that dominated it. As seen in Figure 5.20, I wrote a paragraph about the Great Trek, one of the Afrikaner people's most significant migrations and feats. It was only much later that I learned about the misrepresentation of the Great Trek and its leaders. For example, I recently read the 1976 book "Piet Retief: The Dubious Hero" by R.U. Kenny, which offered a much more nuanced

view of his past. In Figure 5.21, I wrote a paragraph about the Huguenot Festival and why the French came to the Cape Colony. I cannot remember whether we had to dictate or write from the blackboard, but based on this page and the number of spelling mistakes I made, I think we had to write our own sentences about some topics covered by the educator.

Figure 5.20

A paragraph about the Great Trek written by Adrienne van As in 1988 (translated by Adrienne van As)



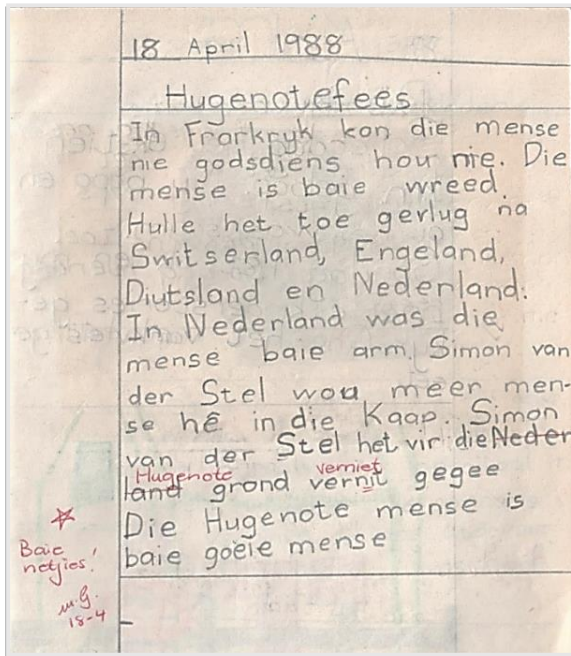
The Great Trek – 1835–1838

Potgieter, Maritz, Retief, Uys, and Pretorius were leaders in the Great trek. The Voortrekkers wanted to buy land in Natal, but the black tribes gave them many problems. Many early settlers were killed, and their livestock was stolen. They were then plunged into poverty. Andries Pretorius suggested that a vow be made to God. Sarel Cilliers led the service. They asked God to help them defeat the Zulus. God did answer their prayers. The Voortrekkers could now stay in

Figure 5.21

A paragraph about the Huguenot Festival in Franschoek written by Adrienne van As in 1988

(translated by Adrienne van As)



18 April 1988
Huguenot Festival

In France, the people could not follow their religion. The people are very peaceful. They then fled to Switzerland, England, Germany and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the people were very poor. Simon van der Stel wanted more people in the Cape. Simon van der Stel gave the Huguenots land for free. The Huguenot people are very good people

In Standard 3, we learned about a long list of South African historical events (in this order): Portuguese trading (Diaz and da Gama)¹⁴, Jan van Riebeeck and the refreshment post (see examples in Figure 5.22), Simon van der Stel¹⁵, the French Huguenots (who are part of my ancestry), Willem Adriaan van der Stel¹⁶, livestock farmers who became migrant farmers, local management (the odd one out), the British Settlers¹⁷, R. Scott, A. G. Bain, Boland mountain passes, and Christopher Columbus.

A year later, in Standard 4 (1991), we focused on the following content: What is history? The course of historical events (with the Gulf War in Iraq in 1991 as an example), the causes of the Great Trek, the interior of South Africa in 1834 (Xhosas, Zulus, Matabeles,

¹⁴ Vasco da Gama (1460–1524) was a Portuguese explorer who sailed to India from Europe (Gururaj Prabhu, 2022).

¹⁵ Simon van der Stel (1639–1712) was appointed as the commander of the Cape of Good Hope in 1679 and became the first governor in 1691 (Ward, 2008).

¹⁶ Willem Adriaan van der Stel (1664–1733), the son of Simon van der Stel, was the commander of the Cape of Good Hope between 1699 and 1707 (Ward, 2008).

¹⁷ About 4 000 British Settlers arrived in the Cape Colony in 1820 (Fourie, 2020). Colonial authorities hoped that these British settlers would serve a dual purpose: to promote the anglicisation of the eastern frontier, and to pacify the Dutch-speaking settlers who frequently clashed with Khoisan and Xhosa groups.

Basutos, and the Griquas), scouting trips and the first treks, the Great Trek (1835–1838) (Potgieter, Maritz, Retief, and Uys), the Voortrekkers in Natal, the defeat of the Zulus, the Voortrekkers and the Griquas, the Republic of Natalia, events that led to British interference, the end of the Great Trek, the two Boer Republics, from Boer Republics and British Colonies to becoming a republic, and medical science. At the end of the workbook, there is a test dated 3 August 1991 (graded, I received 13/20) and an assignment dated 11 November 1991 about David Livingstone (graded, I received 15/20).

The workbooks clearly show that my primary school experiences focused on Afrikaner Nationalist history, which was evident due to the absence of multiple perspectives, different points of view and inclusivity. Afrikaner Nationalism was a political and cultural ideology that emphasised the distinctiveness and supremacy of the Afrikaner (or Boer) people in South Africa (Giliomee, 2003). Emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this nationalist movement sought to promote Afrikaner culture, language, and interests. It played a substantial role in establishing and maintaining the apartheid system. According to Lieberman (2006), it is helpful to look closely at national narratives and then analyse their role in generating conflict and disharmony among people to understand the paradox of competing histories (conflicting perspectives). Nationalist narratives, such as those I learned about, constantly transform past and present relationships (Lieberman, 2006). Lieberman (2006) states that national narratives remake the past and provide a specific framework for interpreting personal experiences beyond daily interactions. Paradoxically, in a national narrative, the present is fused with an imagined historical past while disconnecting the present from an actual personal past (Lieberman, 2006).

Two aspects profoundly affect what is defined as official history: power and ideology. According to Bekerman and Zembylas (2017), the accounts of a master narrative of a country are based on the interests of those in power. At the time, this was the interests of the National Party with its apartheid policy and racial segregation. Such narratives include selected events about the dramatic past of a nation. They are chosen based on their concentration on national and heroic events or the interpretation thereof (Van Berkel, 2017). A History curriculum such

as the one I experienced at school presented a narrow, one-sided narrative that did not allow room for alternative accounts of the past due to the legitimization characteristics of official history (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2017; Psaltis et al., 2017). Official history cannot be accepted as accurate or trustworthy in representing the past (Bentravato, 2019; Teeger, 2015). The History curriculum sanctioned by the state is, instead, a method of anchoring the past in a viable present based on the desires of the ingroup, in my case, a young, White Afrikaner student. Therefore, while I was growing up, formal and official history education justified the domination of certain social groups, in my case, the White population, and discrimination against certain groups by including only certain social structures in the national identity storyline.

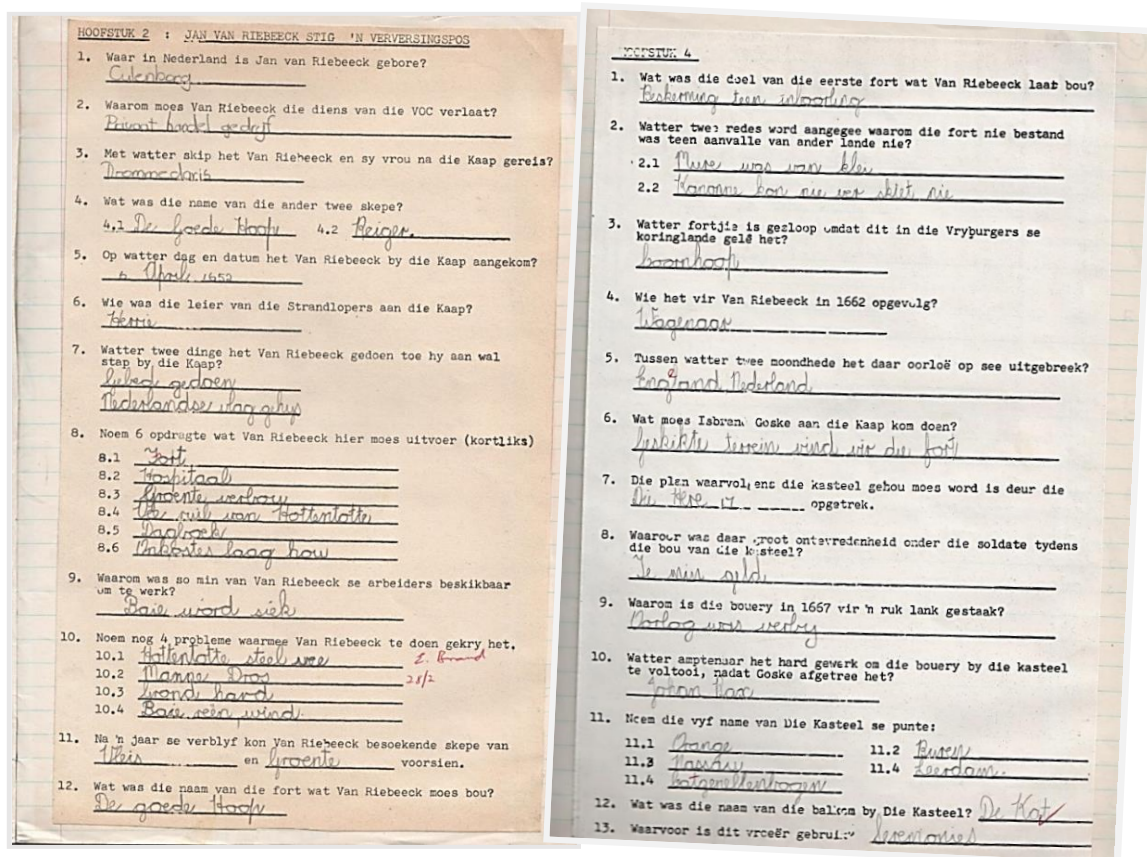
Looking back, I find it interesting that we learned about the war in Iraq in Standard 4 in 1991. For one, it did not fit in with the national Afrikaner narrative. It was very contemporary then, and evidence that Mr Van Niekerk broke away from the prescribed content and textbook. The Gulf War began in 1991 after Iraq's President Saddam Hussein ordered neighbouring Kuwait to be invaded and occupied in early August 1990. Operation Desert Storm began with an immense air offensive by the United States after Hussein defied the United Nations Security Council's demands to withdraw from Kuwait by mid-January 1991 (Halliday, 1994). United States President George Bush declared a ceasefire on 28 February 1991 after 42 days of relentless attacks.

Furthermore, not only did the content we learned in History have a significant impact, but so did the way that the teachers taught history. The pedagogy of history educators focused on reading from the textbook, telling us the story of the section we were studying, and rote memorisation of facts. During or after the lesson, the teachers gave us the exact words we had to fill in the worksheets, which is evident in my Standard 3 workbook (see Figure 5.22). Most often, we just had to fill in the missing words. I cannot remember whether we discussed, let alone debated, the content or even asked questions about what happened in the past, but I do not think we did. In addition, the two pages indicated that we merely had to fill in words in a rote-learning manner.

Simply put, there were no historical investigations. We thought what we heard and learned was the truth and nothing but the truth. This was in line with how the National Party and its policy of apartheid expected us to learn history – one-sided, sanitised White memory history for building a White nation.

Figure 5.22

Examples of Standard 3 History worksheets with a focus on Jan van Riebeeck and the Castle of Good Hope.



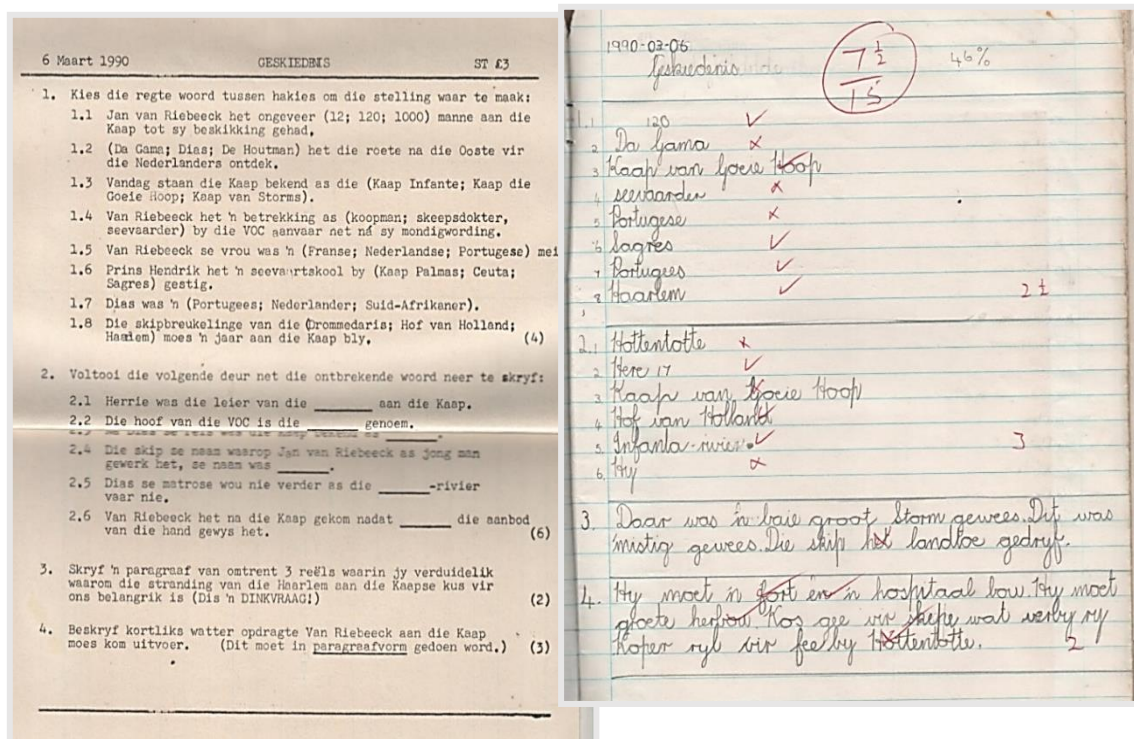
Consequently, Black history was omitted except when it troubled White society, such as Africans during the Great Trek. The two examples (see Figure 5.22) show that we did not learn about the enslaved people who came to the Cape. We did not learn about the influence of settlement and colonisation of the Cape by the DEIC on the Khoi and San people. Their perspectives and experiences were never included or considered.

Most tests at the end of each term were similar to the example given (see Figure 5.23). Preparation for the test was rote learning (a term I only learned later). This particular test had

different questions based on rote learning that had to be completed. There are “choose the correct word” questions, fill in the correct word, and write two paragraphs. Most of the questions were about the names of people (almost exclusively men) and places. We had to describe the impact of the stranding of the *Haarlem*, a DEIC sailing ship (indicated as a thinking question) and what Van Riebeeck had to do at the Cape. Based on my results, neither rote learning nor the different types of questions were my strengths. Of course, I must remember that we practised gymnastics after school at this stage, and I did not spend much time on my homework and studying. Other than writing tests for assessments, we were also assessed on colouring and drawing in the history class.

Figure 5.23

A Standard 5 History test with its answer sheet, completed March 1990

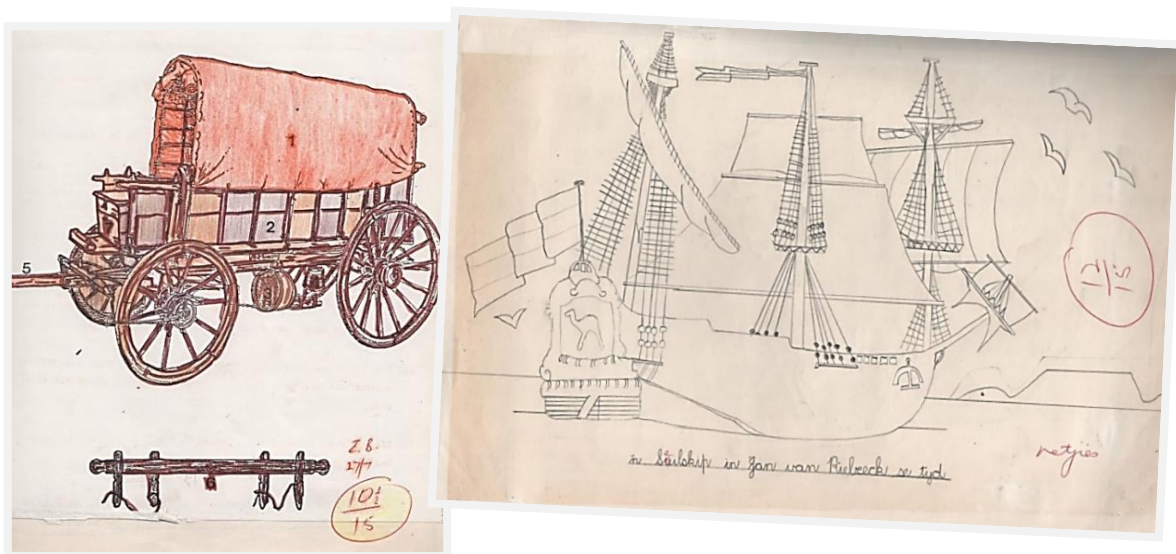


Moreover, though art was one of my strengths, I did not do well with these drawings (see Figure 5.24). I only received 10,5 out of 15 for colouring in my ox wagon and for my drawing of one of Jan van Riebeeck’s sailing ships with Table Mountain in the background and seagulls in the air. Was my colouring so bad that I only received 10,5 out of 15? And then I only received 12 out of 15 for drawing. According to the teacher, the drawing of the ship was

neat. I am unsure where I lost marks since there was no rubric or checklist. It seems the teacher could give whatever mark they saw as fit. Looking back, I think the drawing was suitable for an 11-year-old student.

Figure 5.24

Examples from my Standard 3 workbook include a colouring picture of an ox wagon and a drawing of one of Jan van Riebeeck's sailing ships



In hindsight, what probably dismayed me the most about History was my poor results at the end of each school term, to such a degree that initially, I did not want to include it as data in this autoethnography. Poor results are enough to discourage any child from liking any subject. As evident in my school report of Standard 3 (see Figure 5.25), in the year 1990, across the four terms, I received two Cs, 21 out of 30, and a B. At least a B was not that bad! Furthermore, at least I did well in Physical Education and Writing; however, most of my results were average. I was an average student, as defined by the school system.

Figure 5.25

My Standard 5 school rapport at the end of 1990

NAAM: <i>ADRIENNE .</i>		1ste KWARTAAL — INTERIM		2de KWARTAAL		3de KWARTAAL		4de KWARTAAL	
VAKKE	Maks. Punt	Opmerkinge	Opmerkinge	Maks. Punt	Opmerkinge	Maks. Punt	Opmerkinge	Maks. Punt	Opmerkinge
EERSTE TAAL — AFRIKAANS									
MONDELINGE STELWERK	<i>30</i>	<i>Adrienne lewer werk van in hê gehalte</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Adrienne lewer be- vredigende werk. Dit is aangenaam om haar in die klas te hê.</i>			<i>Andrienne lewer goeie werk. Sy is in voorbeeldige leerling en dit is in plezier om haar te onderrig.</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Adrienne slaag St. 3 Baie geluk!</i>
VOORDRAG									
LEES	<i>30</i>		<i>22</i>					<i>21</i>	<i>70% B</i>
SPEL	<i>10</i>		<i>8</i>					<i>7</i>	<i>70% B</i>
SKRIFTELIKE STELWERK	<i>40</i>		<i>25</i>					<i>28</i>	<i>70% A</i>
TAALSTUDIE	<i>25</i>		<i>17</i>					<i>13</i>	<i>52% C</i>
BEGRIPSTOETS	<i>15</i>		<i>9</i>					<i>8</i>	<i>53% C</i>
TOTAAL	<i>150</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>102</i>		<i>B</i>			<i>96</i>	
SECOND LANGUAGE — ENGLISH									
ORAL COMPOSITION	<i>30</i>		<i>16</i>					<i>19</i>	<i>63% B</i>
RECITATION									
READING	<i>30</i>		<i>16</i>					<i>19</i>	<i>63% B</i>
SPELLING	<i>10</i>		<i>7</i>					<i>7</i>	<i>70% I</i>
WRITTEN COMPOSITION	<i>20</i>		<i>11</i>					<i>13</i>	<i>65% I</i>
LANGUAGE STUDY	<i>15</i>		<i>9</i>					<i>11</i>	<i>73%</i>
COMPREHENSION	<i>15</i>		<i>8</i>					<i>10</i>	<i>67%</i>
TOTAAL	<i>120</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>67</i>		<i>C</i>			<i>79</i>	
WISKUNDE	<i>120</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>83</i>		<i>C</i>			<i>100</i>	
GESONDHEIDOPVOEDING	<i>10</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>6</i>		<i>A</i>			<i>9</i>	
GESKIEDENIS	<i>30</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>21</i>		<i>B</i>			<i>21</i>	
AARDRYKSKUNDE	<i>30</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>21</i>		<i>C</i>			<i>24</i>	
ALGEMENE WETENSAP	<i>30</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>C</i>			<i>20</i>	
SKRIF	<i>10</i>		<i>8</i>		<i>A</i>			<i>8</i>	
XHOSA/TSWANA									
KUNS									
HANDWERK									
GROOTTOTAAL	<i>500</i>		<i>324</i>					<i>357</i>	
GEM. % VAN LEERLING			<i>64,8</i>					<i>71,4</i>	
GEM. % VAN KLAS									
GEM. % VAN STANDERD			<i>60,5</i>					<i>63,7</i>	
DAE AFWESIG:									
KLASONDERWYYSER/ES:		<i>H. Stankamp</i>		<i>H. Stankamp</i>		<i>M. Marais</i>		<i>M. Marais</i>	
SKOOLHOOF:									
DATUM:		<i>1990-03-23</i>		<i>1990-06-21</i>		<i>1990-09-27</i>		<i>1990-12-07</i>	

Note: I was hesitant to share the report due to my low marks.

Unfortunately, I do not have my History workbooks for Standards 6 and 7. It could be that I lost them in our hostel fire in 2000. However, I do not recall that my experiences in Standards 6 and 7 at high school differed from those at primary school. During History lessons (and other subjects), there were endless descriptions of what we had to remember. The teachers talked and talked, and we had to underline what we needed to learn for the test in the textbook. Even more, we depended on rote learning: among others, important dates, the names of people, the names of places, and a list of reasons why an event happened. I cannot remember anybody asking questions about the past. There was no dialogue or interaction. Consequently, my opinion about school history did not change.

In addition to school, I was part of the Voortrekkers from Standards 2 to 5 (1989 to 1992). The Voortrekkers, named after the Afrikaners who had moved away from the Cape

Colony in the 1830s during the Great Trek, was an Afrikaner youth organisation founded in 1931, which coincided with the growth of Afrikaner nationalism for Afrikaans boys and girls. The primary school boys were called “Penkoppe”,¹⁸ and the girls were called “Drawwertjies”.¹⁹ I was even the Drawwertjie leader in my last year at the Voortrekkers. Both my mother and grandmother were also Voortrekkers as children. The motto of the Voortrekkers was “hou koers” (stay on course), and the ABCs of the Voortrekkers were honoured throughout: Afrikanerskap (being an Afrikaner), burgerskap (citizenship) and Christenskap (Christianity) (Die Voortrekkers, n.d.). Therefore, the focus was to develop resilience, service, leadership, and good character through team meetings, skills development, and camping. We visited the Voortrekker Hall each Friday evening, where the Kraaifontein Commando resided. The meetings were either formal or informal. We proudly wore our brown uniforms for the formal meetings, where we had an entire formal flag parade during which we sang the Afrikaans version of “The Song of the Flag”, composed by author and poet C. J. Langenhoven, who also composed the “The Call of South Africa”, the national anthem during apartheid:

The Song of the Flag

Cradled in beauty forever shall fly.

In the gold of her sunshine the blue of her sky,

South Africa’s pledge of her freedom and pride

In their home by sacrifice glorified.

By righteousness armed, we’ll defend in our might

The sign and the seal of our freedom and right,

The emblem and loyalty, service and love;

To our own selves true and to God above,

¹⁸ Boys and young men up to about twenty years of age were called “penkoppe” on commando, a unit of Boer irregular troops, during the South African War, an apt nickname following the same name for a bull calf that is beginning to get horns (Fourie, 2019).

¹⁹ “Drawwertjies” are the diminutive form of people who run, in this case, girls.

Our faith shall keep what our hearts enthrone -

The flag of the land that is all our own. (Written by C. J. Langenhoven) (Berry, 2017)

During the more informal meetings, we first got together as a group, singing church and well-known Afrikaans songs. Among others, we sang the Voortrekker song and one of my favourites, the camping song:

Choir of the Voortrekker Song:

Stay on course! Stay on course! Share the love for our country.

Stay on course! Stay on course! Pick the future, take my hand.

The Camping Song:

What makes a camp so fun? It's coffee, porridge and sausage.

What makes a camp so fun? It's coffee, porridge and sausage.

It's coffee (2x). It's coffee, porridge and sausage.

It's coffee (2x). It's coffee, porridge and sausage.

Clearly, Afrikaner Nationalism and official narratives thrived when I was still in the Voortrekkers. A sense of cultural belonging was strengthened in various ways, especially the more informal and interactive approach (which vastly differed from school), which led to lower transactional and historical distances.

Art History

In high school, I elected not to study history beyond Standard 9 due to my previous experience of transactional and historical distances up until then. Instead, I opted for Art, Geography, isiXhosa, and Mathematics. Art was an elective from Standards 6 to 10, with Art History as a central component, along with the practical component. My experience of Art History differed significantly from my experience of History. Art was also one of the biggest reasons my brothers and I went to Stellenberg High School in Bellville since the local high school did not offer Art as an elective subject. The art classroom was the only place where I

felt a sense of being and belonging. At least, art is an expression of who you are and is more than rote learning.

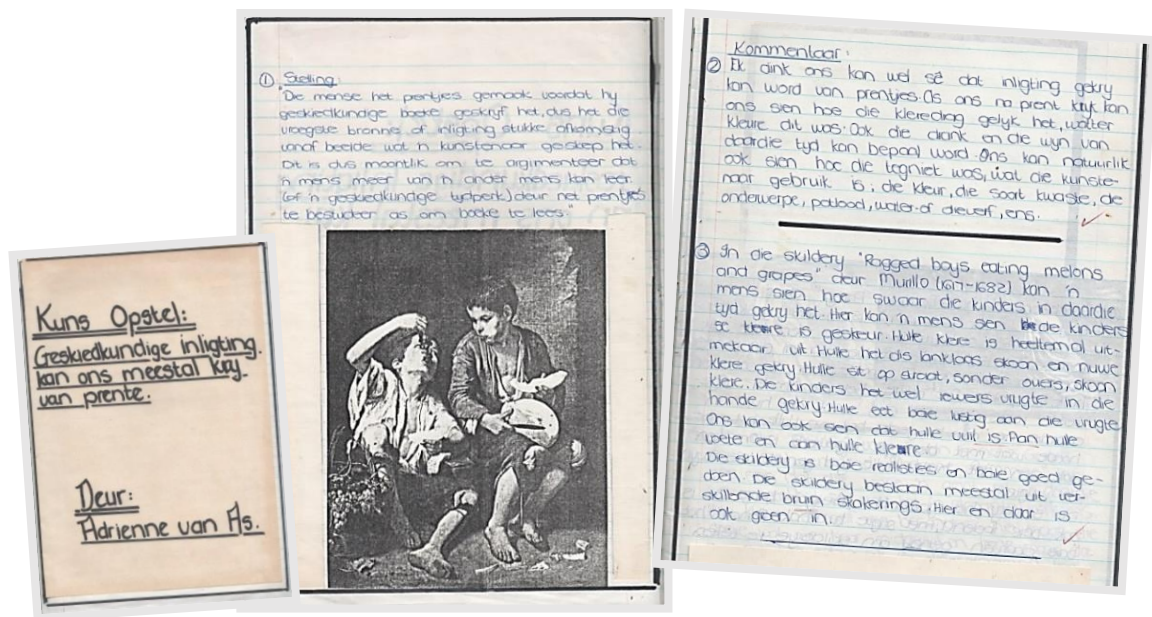
In Art History, the past opened up through the lives of artists, artists' work, architecture, sculpture, and several other art forms, stretching from thousands of years Before the Common Era (BCE) up to the recent past. The different art movements, like in literature and music, were all a reflection of what went on in the society of those years. Works of art became a lens through which to look at the past – not necessarily significant events, important dates and influential people, but also normality. We learned about ordinary people, events, and places of the past. Furthermore, we learned about the context of artists' lives and those of some paintings, placed within the bigger picture of what was happening and changing in their society. Examples are endless, and the more I remember them, the more I think about them. We learned how the Romans further developed Greek columns (among other things). The paintings, sketches, and sculptures by Renaissance artists like Michelangelo and da Vinci were characterised by realism, attention to detail (consider all the scientific and anatomy drawings by da Vinci), colour, and precise study of human anatomy. *The Death of Marat* is a striking painting by French artist David depicting the assassination of Marat, a radical activist of the French Revolution.

Furthermore, we explored human emotion captured in a moment. We learned about empathy and sympathy. We learned about causes and consequences. We learned about time, chronology, change, significance, and perspective through art. We learned about individuals embraced or captured within a broader context: economic, political, social, cultural, religious and environmental. We learned about asking questions: Why did the Romans copy the Greeks? What else did the Romans copy? Why did Renaissance artists return to Realism, colour and human anatomy? Who was Marat? How did he die? The list of questions could go on and on.

I found specific examples of artworks we investigated in an assignment in my Standard 6 workbook. We had to write an art essay titled, "We can get historical information mostly from images" (see Figure 26).

Figure 5.26

My art essay from Standard 6, titled “We can get Historical information mostly from images”



In the essay, we had to comment on a statement on how people made pictures before they wrote historical books, so the earliest sources or pieces of information come from images created by an artist. Therefore, it is possible to argue that people can learn more about another person (or a historical period) by studying pictures rather than reading books. In the first part of this essay, I agreed with the statement and referred to what we could learn about clothes, colours, drinks, wine, and the techniques, brushes, subjects, and other media that artists used. As an example, in the second part of the essay, I used the painting *Ragged boys eating melons and grapes* by Murillo (1617–1682), where I described what we could learn about the boys in the painting, especially their socio-economic and political circumstances, due to their dirty, old, torn clothes, sitting next to a street, without parents. Somewhere, they had found some fruit, which they were eating lustfully. In addition, I included two other paintings which I had also chosen to support the statement: First, *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881) by French artist August Renoir (1841–1919), and second, *Madame Re'camier* by another French artist, Baron Francois Gerard (1770–1837). In my descriptions, I focused a lot on the people's clothes.

According to my second Standard 7 workbook (1994), we learned how European art came to South Africa early and how their ideas influenced architecture and art. These new

ideas led to different landscapes, still lifes, portraits, historical paintings, and sculptures. What was also evident were the different art periods: Impressionism, Realism, Cubism, and Expressionism. We also learned about the Polly Street and the Rorkesdrift Art Centurms, how artists were influenced (with examples), Eastern art in South Africa (Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, also with examples), and South African architecture (but of those from European descent). The two tests that I still have from 1994 and this work indicated that I did not do too badly (70% for the first test and 72% for the second text).

Our journey in art history continued in Standard 8, where we focused on a range of art movements from prehistoric up to 21st-century art and, consequently, a range of historical periods. In all of these periods, we looked at, among others, different art forms, characteristics, techniques, themes and topics, context, development, and several examples. In my test on 8 March 1995, I achieved 82%.

The past features in two other assignments: First, in 1995, we did an assignment on drawing and the basic print processes (guidelines for beginners). We had to include a specific section on the history of drawing, where I focused on rock art and European artists since the 15th century. Second, in 1996, we had to create an encyclopaedia of relief printwork. Specifically, in this assignment, we had to include examples from South African, Japanese, and European artists and the history of relief print works in South Africa, Japan and Europe. In the last paragraph of my conclusion, I wrote the following (this is my translation):

Art is so interesting, and we can learn much by studying it. We can learn about the past: clothing, habits, daily events and much more. We can also learn more about the artist himself, such as habits and thoughts. For this reason, it is essential to know the background and the development to understand the artist.

An assignment, or rather an experience I hold dear to my heart, was a 1996 assignment during which we had to interview an artist. My father made some calls, and we drove to the seaside town of Vermont one Saturday morning to interview Marjorie Wallace, a famous South African artist (although Scottish by birth) (see Figure 5.27). She was married to

an Afrikaans writer, Jan Rabie, and along with other writers, poets, and artists, they were part of the “Sestigers” (writers of the 1960s).

Figure 5.27

A unique photograph of me with Jan Rabie and Marjorie Wallace (photograph by Piet van As)



During the interview, she talked about her time in Paris after World War 2 (where she met Rabie and other Afrikaners), coming to South Africa in 1970 (which she hated), how she saw South Africa as a land for landscapes while she preferred people, the artists that influenced her (Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier), and the impact of getting older. The environment inspired her. Earlier, suffering was for her easier to paint, like the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)²⁰ and the plight of Scottish miners. Later, she tried to paint happiness, which is more challenging. During my interview, she said, “Not every painting is done for a reason. You paint to explain something to yourself, or you paint something you love because you want to possess it.” When she worked on her paintings, she relived the event, and during the process, she interwove her interpretation and her reaction into the experience.

²⁰ On 18 July 1936, Spanish troops began an uprising that led to the Spanish Civil War, often recognised as a prelude to World War 2 (Fourie, 2020).

I found a test script from September 1997, my second to last high school examination. What is interesting is the range of history content that we addressed in this paper. In Question 1 of the first section, I discussed the similarity of the three movements in the early 1900s, Fauvism, Cubism and Expressionism, and their influence on the more modern art of the 20th century. In Question 2, we had to motivate how Dada was an attitude rather than a style (post World War 1). Section 2 of the paper focused on South African artists J. H. Pierneef and Irma Stern, the Polly Street Art Centrum in Johannesburg (1952), and the Rorkes Drift Art Centrum in Zululand (1963). Pierneef, born in 1886, and Stern, born in 1894, taught me about the South African context from a White perspective. However, their art visualised many South African landscapes in the 20th century. Stern focused more on African cultures and their contrast with Western art. In addition, the focus was also on Stern's struggles and how her art was full of her emotions. In turn, Pierneef was more loyal towards South Africa during his breakaway from tradition, but not as much as Stern. The primary purpose of the Polly Street Art Centrum, established by Cecil Skotnes, was to expose the Black art community since they had had no exposure to art in school. These art centres gave Black artists, like Azaria Mbatha, Sydney Kumalo, and John Muafangejo, the stepping stone when doors were closed for Black artists, and they did not receive the opportunities available to White artists. What stands out (other than my 75% for this test) was my exposure to a broad South African history and its contexts through the lives and work of artists of all races.

Notably, our art teacher gave us specific instructions for the research project and the examination of the second section, South African art. We had to describe and discuss the context (origins, predecessors, and influences). With any discussion of South African art, the socio-political context within which artists operated had to be considered – whether in the days of colonialism, the years of the apartheid or the State of Emergency in the 1980s. Both township art and resistance art were examples of political reactions to the way of life in South Africa during the apartheid era.

The focus on context was also evident in a Standard 10 assignment on South African architecture in the 20th century. In my introduction, I started by referring to how world events

influenced architecture in the 20th century. Architecture changed and developed and had exciting side effects. I was surprised to read that I had even referred to the Industrial Revolution's influence on the changes and the influence of developments on social problems. I further discussed the developments throughout the 21st century with examples of internal factors, like Afrikaner Nationalism and the building of the Voortrekker Monument (1936), the post-World War 2 period (1950–1975) and architecture inspired by African history (like Great Zimbabwe). For this assignment, I spent a few hours in Cape Town taking photographs of different 20th-century buildings to illustrate the development of architecture in the 20th century.

My school years stretched from 1986 to 1997 – thus transcending the late years of apartheid and the end of it in 1994 – and for my last four years, I was schooled in the new South Africa. Looking at what was happening around us with a broader lens is essential, especially what happened due to the apartheid regime, the end of apartheid, and the dawn of democracy. The late 1980s are seen as the last critical years of apartheid. In June 1986, during my Sub A and a year later, escalating violence prompted South African President P. W. Botha will abandon efforts to appease international opinion. In March 1986 alone, 179 people were killed, the most since the violence had initially broken out in 1984. However, May 1986 exceeded that total when 213 people died in renewed political upheavals. Botha declared a nationwide State of Emergency in June 1986, giving security forces sweeping powers to quell unrest. Thousands of activists were detained, and crackdowns on community organisations ensued. Over 20 000 activists were held in 1986, followed by trials and censorship. The government prioritised restoring stability over international criticism (Madlingozi, 2020; Stemmet, 2015). Naturally, due to my age, there was no truthful news coverage, and, with my parents not talking about it, I was unaware of all the problems during that time. By the late 1980s, South Africa's economy was in recession, and large parts of the country, particularly the townships where Black people had been moved to, were becoming ungovernable (Larson, 2019). In addition, international campaigns for economic sanctions against South Africa had gained steam in the 1980s (Little, 2023). Eventually, several

countries enacted sanctions in a show of international condemnation of the apartheid system (Larson, 2019).

When I was in Standard 3, Nelson Mandela was released on Sunday, 11 February 1990, nine days after the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) unbanning during a speech by President F. W. de Klerk and further negotiations continued after that to formally end apartheid (Little, 2023). In March 1992, White South Africans participated in a national referendum in which they voted to transition from a minimal version of democracy to a full one. Sixty-nine per cent of the White people voted for President de Klerk of the National Party to continue discussing a new constitution to extend Black peoples' political rights (Schwartzman & Taylor, 1999). This led to South Africa's first non-racial democratic election on 27 April 1994 (Facing History & Ourselves, 2018). The National Assembly elected Nelson Mandela as President and F.W. de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki as deputies. The new South Africa was officially launched on 10 May 1994 with Nelson Mandela's inauguration as the new President of the Republic of South Africa (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007).

In addition to the broader apartheid and democracy narrative, I also have to consider the impact that apartheid and the end of apartheid had on the country's education system. The apartheid system had created educational inequalities through several racist policies (Ocampo, 2004), the most prominent being the Bantu Education Act of 1952. It ensured that Black people received an education that would limit their potential and remain in the working class (University of Cape Town, 2004, as cited in Ocampo, 2004). According to Ocampo (2004), this policy directly affected learning content to further racial inequalities by preventing access to further education. Since these policies ensured that the content and level of education maintained social inequalities, altering these policies in a post-apartheid era was a valid step towards instating social equality (Ocampo, 2004). School history before the end of apartheid focused on the colonial powers and the history of its minority White population against the Black majority, who appeared in the shadow and distorted (Bertram, 2020). The historical content reflected a Eurocentric and Afrikaner nationalist perspective. In addition, history education during apartheid, as I explained autoethnographically above, was mainly in

the traditional fact-learning tradition, emphasising rote learning of knowledge (Bertram, 2020) and leading to more distances. On the other hand, the transactional and historical distances were less in art history.

By the time I was in high school (1993–1997), a new curriculum (called Curriculum 2005) for a new country was conceived after July 1994 (Ocampo, 2004), based on cooperation, critical thinking, social responsibility, and the empowerment of students to participate in society (Ocampo, 2004). According to Sayed and Kanjee (2013), the importance of engagement with post-apartheid education challenges is reflected in the number of green and white papers in several key areas. These papers manifested the policy concerns of the time and revealed how these concerns were reflected both in the continuity of subsequent policy and policy departures. The first post-apartheid period remains the most significant because it required legislation and frameworks to remedy apartheid's legacy and transform the education system. Numerous Acts were enacted under the then Minister of Education, Minister Bengu (1994–1999) (Sayed & Kanjee, 2013). However, I was unaware of any changes to the school curriculum during my high school years. Consequently, it still felt like a traditional approach where I generally experienced more distances.

Studying to Become a Teacher

After finishing school and, as indicated in The Entry Hall, after much deliberation, I decided to become a teacher and study at the former Boland College of Education in Wellington (now CPUT's Wellington Campus) in the Western Cape (1998–2001). This choice was mainly due to my combined love for art, geography, and physical education (me doing gymnastics) and my inability to decide between these fields of study. As a teacher, I would have been able to keep on focusing on all of these.

I was fascinated by the richness of the past, not only Wellington's past but also the long tradition of teacher training in Wellington. Wellington was initially known as Wagenmakersvallei (the Valley of the Wagonmakers) and was proclaimed a town in 1840 on the farm Champagne. Part of the land was used for the church consecrated in the same year.

The rest of the land was divided into plots, becoming the town's nucleus (Wellington Museum, n.d.). A teacher training college opened on 26 January 1896 in Wellington (Wellington Museum, n.d.). I stayed in Bliss Hall, built in 1904 and named after Anna Bliss, one of the American teachers. It had a prominent façade and entrance, and although unusable, we even had a beautiful, old Victorian fireplace in my first-floor room.

Slowly but surely, my interests changed during my undergraduate studies. While I continued to love subjects like Art, Geography, and Physical Education, Afrikaans and History soon became part of my favourite subjects. For this reason, I took History as one of the main subjects in my final year, along with two other electives, Afrikaans and Art. This was a severe change, considering my school history experiences. I was blessed to have had inspiring lecturers who ignited my interest and curiosity. We were encouraged and given the space to question our knowledge and understanding. This was the case in both the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in History, but also in the other school subjects and subjects like Professional Studies and Education.

It is important to note that I did not have many documents for the first three years of my studies because I lost all my files and books in a fire. On the night of Monday, 24 October 2000, our hostel, Bliss Hall, burned down (see Figure 5.28). This was a week before my third-year end-of-year examinations. I lost almost all of my belongings in the fire, including many books and other sentimental items, like my bible, my grandmother's wedding ring, my Sub A teddy bear, many photographs, and my folder with all the newspaper clippings from my gymnastic years.

Figure 5.28

Bliss Hall was destroyed in a fire on the night of 24 October 2000 (photographer unknown).



Note. I especially included the photograph on the right since my room was the third one on the right.

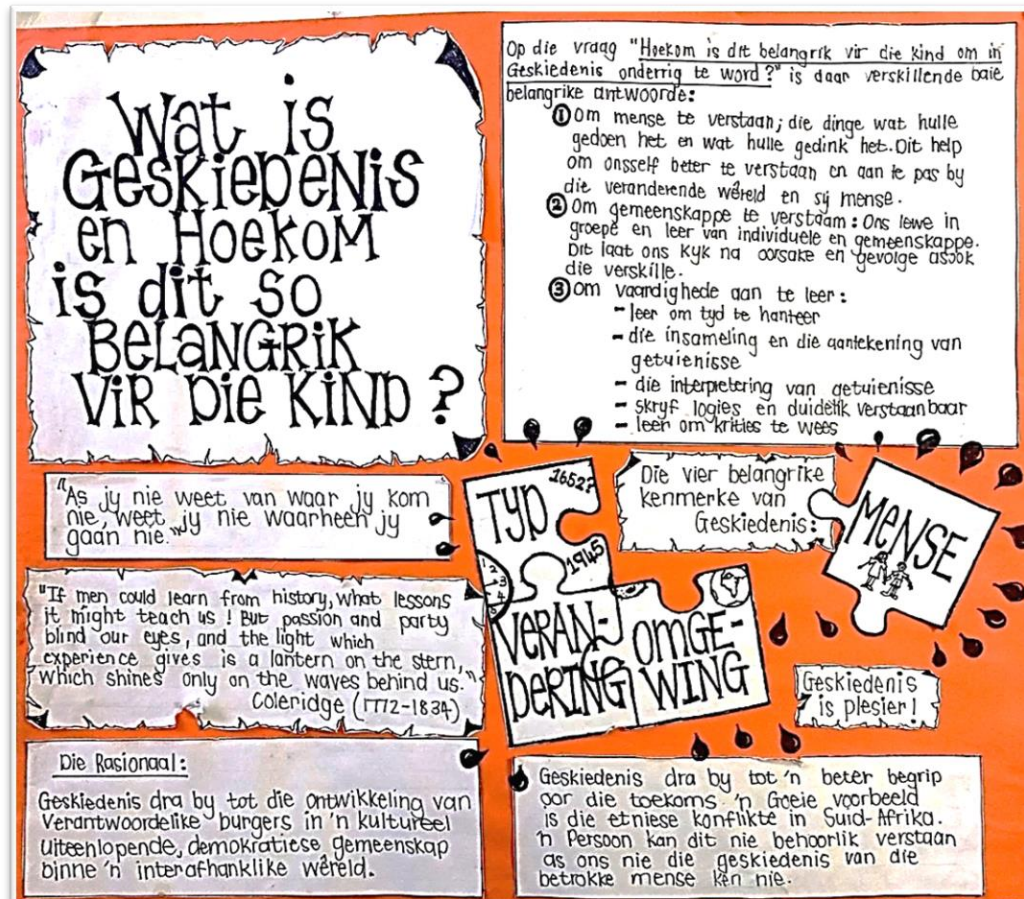
That evening, as I listened to a John Denver tape (singing along to “I am leaving on a jet plane” and “Grandma’s feather bed”), I completed a history assignment about District Six, studied hard for a mathematics test (due the following morning), and helped a second-year neighbour with her history assignment. While constructing my cabinets, I realised how tangible my memory is when physical artefacts, photographs, and documents are lost. This loss almost disengaged me from the past and the memories connected to these items, almost as if the connected history becomes vague and misty much more quickly. However, I hold on to the fact that a human life is more important than a building and everything else that was lost.

Fortunately, I retrieved one history poster from my first year that was still in the lecturer’s office. As evident in Figure 5.29, it is clear that there was a change in my understanding of the purpose of history based on what we had learned through assignments

like this. This was a far cry from the history that I was taught at school, and it resonated with me, filling a need to be connected to the past.

Figure 5.29

I made a poster in my first year as an education student, focusing on what History is and why it is so important.



This poster is about what history is and why it is essential for a child to learn. I focused on three reasons a child needs to be taught history. First, understanding people, what they did, and what they thought helps us to understand ourselves better and adapt to the changing world and its people. Second, to understand societies since we live in societies and learn from individuals and communities. It lets us look at causes and consequences as well as differences. Third, to learn skills such as handling time, collecting and recording evidence, interpreting evidence, writing logically and understandably, and learning to be critical. In

addition, I highlighted four essential features of history: time, change, environment, and people. Among other things, I wrote the following on this poster (translated by me):

History contributes to a better understanding of the future ... History contributes to a better understanding of the future. A Good example is the ethnic conflicts in South Africa. A person cannot fully understand it if we do not know the history of the people involved.

I still have a few other history assignments from my undergraduate studies that escaped the fire and existed as evidence. I only have one other history from my first three years of study. This assignment was also still with the lecturer when the hostel burned down. In my third year (2000), I thoroughly enjoyed working on a module for Grade 6 students which focused on archaeology. It was an essential study guide and manual.

Despite the devastation at the end of my third year, I was fortunate enough to be asked to curate the museum's new extension in the Goodnow Hall, a beautiful building with a hall on the first floor, built in 1886. Whereas the initial museum had focused on the history of teacher training in Wellington since 1896/97, this new extension focused on the Boland College of Education years from 1990 to 1999/2000. Fortunately, I had many primary sources, including newsletters, magazines, and photographs. My connection with the past deepened while working with all the primary sources and trying to memorialise the people and events. I felt close to the history of teacher training in Wellington and was proud to be part of it.

Unfortunately, Goodnow Hall was burned down in October 2016 during the continuing student unrest. Most of the museum's content was lost or had a lot of smoke or water damage. I remember sitting outside the hall, near tears, while some items were removed to prevent further damage. It felt as if I had, again, lost a part of myself when a building burned down. Years later, during a reunion, we could see what was left of the exhibition (see Figure 5.30). My heart tightened as I looked at what remained and felt a sense of loss.

Figure 5.30

*We could view what remained of the museum exhibition during a college reunion in 2019
(photograph by Adrienne van As).*



Fortunately, I still have a few assignments from my fourth year in 2001. In one assignment, we could choose our research topics. I chose to blend my love for art and history by writing a research essay titled “The development and expansion of art and culture through especially the phenomenon of art festivals in South African society from 1990 to 2000”. For History Methodology, we had to plan and develop a learning contract for Grade 9 students about apartheid in South Africa.

The final assignment that I want to highlight is one that was not given to us by the History lecturer, but by another lecturer. I chose the topic of slavery (History Grade 6) for a Professional Studies assignment. We had to choose the content knowledge, historical skills, and classroom actions for this assignment. Then, I had to provide a historical source with questions on four levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (based on the topic and the historical skills I had chosen). In addition, I provided information about the selected historical skill.

In a few short years, my history education world had transformed alongside that of the broader South African society, mainly due to changes made to the curriculum and the insights I had gained through various experiences. In this part of this second cabinet of curiosity, it is essential to note that Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was implemented in 1998 and viewed as the

primary plan to eliminate the inequalities of the apartheid education system (Van Deventer, 2009). This is echoed by Drydon-Peterson and Siebörger (2006b), who state that the construction of memory in South Africa was, in the past and as I experienced in varying degrees, under the control of a White minority. The history taught in school was the result of this construction and was connected ideologically and politically to the apartheid regime – this construction influenced my positionality against History for a long time.

Owing to these broader changes, since my first year as a student teacher, I have been taught a new curriculum that is vastly different from the intended and hidden curricula I had experienced until then. Curriculum 2005 was an outcomes-based, integrated knowledge system based on student-centred pedagogy to improve the quality of education for all in South Africa (Van Deventer, 2009). In addition, Curriculum 2005 aimed to develop thinking and problem-solving citizens who would be empowered to participate actively and productively in South Africa's development (Mdtshane, 2007).

Furthermore, the different learning programmes (subjects) had to promote students' abilities to be critical and creative thinkers (Christie, 1999, as cited in Mdtshane, 2007). Mdtshane (2007) captured the new focus by stating that the learning programmes had to provide students with activities enabling them to brainstorm, analyse, give points of view, interpret, gather data, and organise. The activities also had to promote group work and teamwork in various ways, as well as cooperative learning. Learning activities need to be student-centred and integrated across the curriculum. Additionally, students were to learn by doing and had to be assessed continuously using different approaches to cater for individual differences. The activities needed to strengthen the development of student's respect for their own cultural identity, language, values, and cultures and religions different from their own (Mdtshane, 2007).

Eight critical and five developmental outcomes guided all the learning programmes (Department of Education, 2002). Each learning programme consisted of specific outcomes across all eight learning areas and a list of activities to explore the outcomes (Taylor, 2012). History and Geography were not explicitly mentioned, merging into Social Sciences as one of

the eight learning programmes. There were nine specific outcomes for Social Sciences. I remember that we wrote tests in our different subjects where we had to remember the specific outcomes, especially in our first two years of teacher training.

Consequently, as a result of the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in schools, educators had to change some of their traditional methods and adopt an outcomes-based approach to deliver Curriculum 2005 to their classrooms (Mdutshane, 2007). As student teachers, we also had to adapt to these changes since Curriculum 2005 was very different from the curriculum we had experienced at school. Furthermore, our lecturers had to adapt to these changes.

Alongside curriculum transformation, the new South Africa also brought about radical structural changes related to education. During apartheid, colleges and universities were racially separated without centralised control. In 1994, there were approximately 101 Colleges of Education in South Africa, eight of which were distance education institutions. Ten years later, all these colleges had ceased to exist as independent entities (Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) based on various problems such as no national planning, quality assurance, accountability, curricula, qualifications, or a vast difference in per capita costs (Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Many Colleges of Education were closed, merged, or combined into more established higher education institutions between 1994 and 2000 due to provincial rationalisation processes aimed at overcoming apartheid's educational inequalities and reducing an oversupply of primary teachers (Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011).

In 1990, Wellington Teachers' College amalgamated with Paarl College of Education to form the Boland College of Education (Anker, 2007; Moll, 2010). The Colleges of Education of Denneoord, Oudtshoorn, Graaff-Reinet, Port Elizabeth, and Athlone were also amalgamated into this teaching college in 1994 (Anker, 2007). All these education colleges had one thing in common: they were dedicated to training teachers for primary education (Moll,

2010). The medium of instruction was always Afrikaans, and the students were predominantly Afrikaans-speaking (Anker, 2007).

By the time I studied to become a teacher in Wellington during the late 1990s, it had become clear that the remaining 25 institutions did not have enough students to become viable self-sustainable institutions (Department of Education, 2008, as cited in Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). In addition, there were added challenges like high costs, low quality, and an oversupply of teachers. The integration addressed regional needs, sound educational practice, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness (Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Therefore, in December 2000, the remaining Colleges of Education (including two distance education colleges) were declared subdivisions of various South African universities and technikons from 31 January 2001 (Department of Education, 2000, as cited in Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011).

Consequently, during my fourth year, the Boland College of Education became part of the Cape Technikon and later amalgamated with other institutions to create the CPUT. Consequently, we could upgrade our Higher Education Diplomas to BEd degrees by studying some extra credits with evening and weekend lessons and extra assignments. However, we finished the degree three months later than initially planned. Owing to all the changes, we did not get any bursaries or scholarships. As mentioned previously, my parents did not qualify for a study loan in my early study years; therefore, I had to work over weekends and during holidays. Among others, I did some waitressing at two restaurants (one in Wellington), counted money at Dion's (one December), and worked at a butchery for the longest time.

At the end of my undergraduate studies, the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) Grades R to 9 (Schools) policy was being implemented. The purpose of Social Sciences was to study relationships between people and between people and the environment (Department of Education, 2002). According to the Department of Education (2002), these relationships and people's values, attitudes, and beliefs vary over time. The concepts, skills, and processes of History and Geography formed critical elements of the Social Sciences.

Environmental and human rights education were also considered integral to History and Geography. The Social Sciences statement concerned what students learned, how students learned, and how students constructed knowledge. The statement encouraged students to ask and find answers to questions about society and the environment in which they live. In addition, the statement aimed to contribute to developing informed, critical, and responsible citizens. It also aimed to equip students to contribute to developing a just and democratic society. Three history outcomes of the RNCS replaced the nine specific outcomes of Social Sciences of C2005. These were: first, during historical enquiry, the student can use enquiry skills to investigate the past and present; second, with historical knowledge and understanding, the student can demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding; and third, with historical interpretation, the student can interpret aspects of the past.

I began my BEd Honours five years after completing my undergraduate degree while teaching at Tulbagh High School. What I distinctly remember about my year studying BEd Honours (2007) was the required level of research and that we did history as intended: practically. The assignments we received encouraged and guided us to think like historians and history educators. I still have a few assignments from that year. Owing to my connection with the Strandveld, I did a research assignment on the way of life of the early inhabitants at the southern tip of South Africa, focusing on Agulhas National Park in the Strandveld. The research assignment I probably enjoyed the most and whose location is, unfortunately, unknown, was due to some connections with my ancestors. It was a research project on a cemetery. Since I lived in Tulbagh by then, I chose the old Dutch Reformed Church's cemetery on Church Street. I had an incomplete list of names and details on who had been buried at this cemetery. In addition, I had the book *Church Street in the Land of Waveren* by Gawie and Gwen Fagan on their restoration project of the houses on Church Street after the 1969 earthquake. This book gives a thorough overview of who lived in each house. Consequently, I triangulated information in the book about who was buried and where they were buried in the cemetery. This brought me back to my father's stories about graves and all the graveyards we had visited in the past.

For the History Education module, I even designed a WebQuest, an inquiry-based activity in which most or all the students drew the information from the internet. My WebQuest for Grade 7 students was about the history of South Africa before 1500 CE. Thinking about it now, it started to pave the way for me considering the use of technology and the web to guide more student-centred learning – something I did a lot later (see my third cabinet).

Conclusion to Second Cabinet of Curiosity: Sitting Behind the Desk

The second cabinet of curiosities is a bricolage of transactional and historical distances due to the different lived experiences and the different lenses used to study the past within the changing landscape of the South African government and education system.

Distinct types of history are present in this cabinet, often in juxtaposition. My experiences of school history and art history were also vastly different from my experiences growing up with a combination of different types of history (oral, social, family, local, unofficial, and informal) through all the stories and visits to places with historical significance (as evident in my first cabinet of curiosities). School history captured Afrikaner Nationalism and the apartheid education policies of that time. By contrast, art history brought a unique lens through which to learn, understand, and feel more about the past. In addition, there is the apposition of unofficial history, which I experienced via stories in the first curiosity cabinet, versus official history, in the form of Afrikaner Nationalism, which I experienced especially during school history in this second curiosity cabinet.

As I close the doors to my second cabinet of curiosity, I am affected by the profound journey through my history education. This path has been both personal and pedagogical. Delving into my school workbooks, I have unearthed layers of understanding about how historical distance was navigated – or often not – in my formative years. This retrospective is not just an academic exercise; it is a reconnection with the transactional distance once felt as a student, now re-examined with the critical eye of an educator. My history, once delivered in the static pages of school workbooks, came alive as I pondered the interplay of teaching methods and historical representation in shaping my grasp of the past. Through this

autoethnographic exploration, I have confronted the simplifications and biases that once coloured my understanding of historical events like the Great Trek and the Huguenot Festival. In recognising these, I have also recognised the potential for history education to transcend its transactional nature, transforming into an interactive dialogue that diminishes historical distance. By infusing history teaching with the vividness of lived experience, educators can bridge the emotional and cognitive gaps that too often leave the past feeling distant and disconnected.

The cabinets of curiosities I have crafted are more than mere repositories of memory; they are an invitation to consider how history is presented and perceived. Each item and memory reflects the need for a critical engagement with historical content that acknowledges the complexities and nuances often lost in traditional historical narratives. This reflection serves as a reminder that how we teach history can either widen or close the gap between the past and present and between the educator and student. In summing up this cabinet, I am reminded that history and history education, at its most effective, are mirrors reflecting not just the events of the past but also the lived experience of those who study it.

Third Cabinet of Curiosity: Standing in Front of Students

My Third Cabinet Of Curiosity

The title of this cabinet, Standing in Front of Students, is contradictory since, as you as the reader will see later, sometimes I merely sat behind a laptop. However, I am an educator and a lecturer in this cabinet of curiosity – a radical change of position from the first and second cabinets.

The temporal distance from my time at the TOGI is much closer since I worked there until July 2023. Therefore, it is easy to miss how history was a companion before July 2017. Although not always explicitly told, history was still evident and part of my life to a lesser degree until then. In the first part of this cabinet, I focused on the time I was teaching, while in the second part of this cabinet, I concentrated on my time at TOGI. In this third cabinet of

curiosities, I continue to explore my lived experience of history as a companion and the various degrees of transactional and historical distances I experienced.

Before Lecturing at Two Oceans Graduate Institute

After finishing my undergraduate studies at the beginning of 2002, I went to London to teach, geographically far away from South Africa. Since I did supply teaching (going out to a school when a teacher was absent), there was no consistency, relationship-building, or planning. I was able to hold out for three months before returning home. Although I was in London for only three months, I gained much knowledge about teaching in a different context and seeing how it is done in another country, mainly due to visiting various schools during that period. In addition, I took the opportunity of my time in London to drink in its history, which was much older than the South African history I had grown up with, mainly due to the colonial view that South Africa was only born in 1652.

On returning to South Africa, I started teaching at Tulbagh High School (about a 90-minute drive west of Cape Town) in 2003 and was there for five years. Although called a high school, the school hosted all grades, from Grade R to Grade 12. Initially, I taught all the subjects the educator I had replaced taught and even took over his animated under-seven and eight rugby teams as a coach. It was a broad mixture of subjects in the various grades in the Intermediate and Senior Phases (Grades 4 to 9; ages 10 to 15 years), including Afrikaans, Natural Science, Life Orientation, Arts and Culture (Art and Drama), Biblical Studies, and Economic and Management Studies. Eventually, when I left at the end of 2007, I taught Arts and Culture (Grades 4 to 9), Life Orientation (Grades 8 and 9), Afrikaans (Grade 7) and Bible (Grade 5).

Alas, I never got to teach history at Tulbagh High School. As such, the distance from history and teaching history was further than I would have liked. However, I still loved and missed history, which led me to take it as a major when I studied for my BEd Honours at CPUT (Wellington Campus) in 2007. Furthermore, history was never far away. The past surrounds you in Tulbagh. The town, school, and surrounding areas have a rich heritage and history.

Tulbagh is the fourth oldest town in South Africa (Terblanche, 2018). In 1743, Baron Van Imhoff declared a new town named Het Land van Waveren or Roodezand (red sand). A magistracy was not established in the Land of Waveren until 1804, and the town was renamed Tulbagh. The town was named after Ryk Tulbagh, governor of the DEIC's station at the Cape, between 1751 and 1771. Furthermore, my great-grandmother Maria Magdalena Theron, née Spies (from my mother's side), was born and grew up in the area and became a teacher like me. Consequently, I always felt a connection to Tulbagh due to this ancestral heritage.

Walking down Church Street was like stepping back in time. Church Street and some of the historic farm buildings in the surrounding areas were restored to their former Cape Dutch-style glory after they were severely damaged or destroyed in a devastating earthquake in September 1969. In that sense, history surrounded me, much like it did in Wellington and the Strandveld. The Cape Dutch style was considered the most authentic form of South African architectural heritage. In this way, the recovery of Cape Dutch architecture became synonymous with conservation practice and Unionist and Nationalist Afrikaner history, identity, and ideology during apartheid (Augustyn-Clark, 2017). According to Augustyn-Clark (2017), the recreation of the past in the present is always a product of its time, reflecting the ideals and longings of a particular generation. In addition, history, and therefore heritage, is a social and cultural construct demonstrated in the restoration of Church Street in Tulbagh. This was an important thought for me to dwell on as a teacher of history.

In addition, the past was still a companion at Tulbagh High School. Each day, as I went up the stairs to the staffroom, I looked at all the old staff photographs. I organised the school's birthday party when it turned 93. According to my notes for a speech during assembly, the first school was at 12 Church Street, although there were several small farm schools. In 1849, the wine cellar of the parsonage was used as a school, but when the school was declared a state school, it moved to 43 Church Street, moved to the Old Church, and back again to number 43. In 1905, the inauguration took place on the school's current premises. The original school buildings were severely damaged and demolished during the earthquake of 1969, and a new

school was built on the same premises. As per the colonial history of South Africa, these schools were reserved for White students, and this only really changed after 1994.

One memorable experience I had was when we had to clear out the offices in the library as the content was not being used, and it had become a dumping ground. There were old transparencies, photograph slides, and even an old film projector that still worked. Among these, I found a cardboard box full of old Kodak photographs. I could not throw it away. Later that day, I had time to review most of the photographs and determined they were the travel photographs of an older couple. Among all the photographs, one note was signed by Mr and Mrs Diamond. I kept these photographs for years and years (and even used them in my lessons) until I realised during the COVID-19 lockdown that social media had advanced so much that I might be able to find out more about who they were and whether there were any relatives. At that time, I was on a few Facebook groups related to Cape Town's past. It did not take long for a family member of the Diamonds to recognise them. With their help, the photographs were posted to the daughter of the Diamonds, who lives in Australia. This way, although I could not teach history, I could keep it as a companion.

After completing my BEd Honours degree at CPUT at the end of 2007 (while still teaching at Tulbagh High School), I immediately started my master's degree. At last, I could return to history for the first time since I had received the opportunity to lecture Social Sciences and History at CPUT in Wellington, not only for the Intermediate and Senior Phase students but even for the Foundation Phase students. Unfortunately, it was only a part-time position, and I struggled financially despite doing something I loved. Nevertheless, even while working on curriculum and material development at the CMGE, a former unit of CPUT, history, as part of social sciences, was a constant companion and transactionally close to me. Here, we focused on unwrapping history to repack it in units effective for multigrade classrooms. For this reason, we asked questions about themes, concepts, and skills relevant to studying the past. In addition, while training teachers all over South Africa, I got to experience the diversity of contexts in our South African schools and the environments our students came from.

I returned to CPUT from 2014 to 2016, but this time as a Geography lecturer. Fortunately, when studying people and places, the past is interlinked. In addition, I am versatile and have a range of experience, and I found myself lecturing other subjects, like Education and Professional Studies. During this time, I was still contracted to help with the in-service teacher training of multigrade teachers. Even more, I was able to experience the broader South African education landscape. However, this all changed at the end of 2016 when my CPUT contract ended, and I had to find a new venture.

Lecturing at Two Oceans Graduate Institute

At last, it was my chance to teach history and history education and to mediate the learning process. History and history education became more constant companions when I joined TOGI. I had longed for this opportunity.

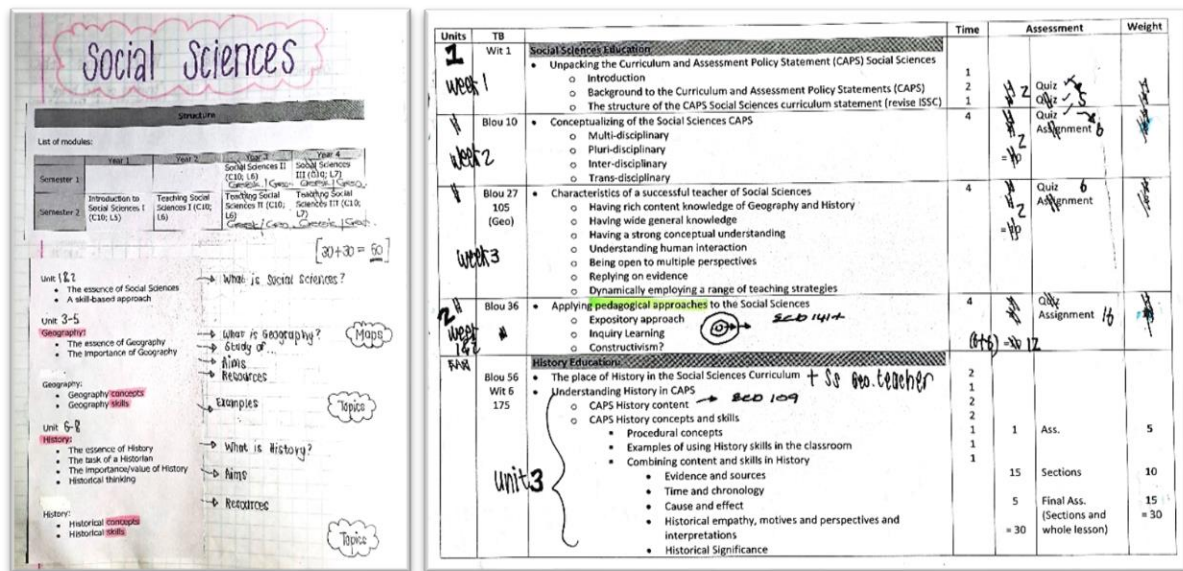
At that time, TOGI was a brand new private higher education institution in South Africa, primarily focusing on training teachers for public and private primary schools in various socio-economic contexts. The TOGI mission is directly integrated with the work and contribution of the Two Oceans Education Foundation (2OEF), which has been instrumental in establishing schools in various disadvantaged communities. Against this background, the 2OEF identified the need for quality teacher education. In 2012, 2OEF decided to establish a private higher education institution. The primary purpose of educating teachers is within the parameters of the work and goals of the 2OEF Foundation and the context of diverse educational and socio-economic needs (Two Oceans Graduate Institute, 2020a, 2020b). The consequence was the establishment of TOGI, which commenced with the BEd Intermediate Phase programme in July 2017.

In addition, it was exciting to start something new: I am one of only a few lecturers to build the intricacies of the course and the modules. I have come to love instructional design and history since my studies, and TOGI gave me ample opportunities for these loves to come to the fore. Every learning engagement falls within the structure of instructional design – how learning takes place and how to create the best learning environments that foster knowledge

and mastery (Hodell, 2021). Furthermore, instructional design is a process; thus, it is the systematic development of instructional specifications using learning and instructional theory to ensure the quality of instruction – a process that started for me in 2017 (as seen in Figure 5.31) and continued every semester after that. It is the entire process of analysing learning needs and goals and developing a delivery system to meet those needs (Brown & Green, 2020).

Figure 5.31

Some of my initial 2017 planning notes, preparing for Social Sciences



Note. Since 2017, I have kept improving this module based on my own reflections and experiences as well as those of the students.

Furthermore, I was excited to know that we were providing an opportunity for new students to become students. Many of those students could not gain access to residential universities but were well-motivated to become excellent teachers. These motivations were apparent when we interviewed them as part of their application process at TOGI.

Though I sat in front of the LMS, Moodle®, for the first time, not knowing what to do, building everything from scratch was an exciting journey (we only received the module descriptors) to build a curriculum and think about the content, strategies, and assignments

while considering who the students were, the end goal, and the best road to get them there. I have realised that this is something I love to do. Furthermore, it is an evolving process since I try to reflect on improving the history programme and module during and after each semester.

At first, I saw the students once every second week due to our blended approach, a combination of face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning. In between the contact and face-to-face sessions, the students worked online. These face-to-face sessions were aimed to be interactive since the students had to complete a specific section of the content and activities independently. It was wonderful to get to know the students; however, we soon moved to a fully online mode of delivery when more and more students enrolled who lived too far away to attend any contact sessions. Consequently, it was more challenging to get to know the students. In addition, there were more challenges since the online learning platform had to be fully utilised to mediate the learning process. Fortunately, when the lockdown started in March 2020 due to COVID-19, we were already entirely online and did not struggle with the transition like other higher education institutions. However, I was able to draw on the ample seminars and webinars about aspects of online learning that took place during that time to see where and how I could improve the online learning experience for the students.

As part of the data construction for this cabinet, I took field notes at the beginning of 2022 to reflect on my lived experience of transactional and historical distances while I lectured at TOGI. What more could I come to understand about these distances? How did I reflect on these distances and take action to overcome them?

In my field notes, I highlighted the importance of maintaining an open dialogue with my students, one of the core factors of transactional distance. I made it a routine to check student submissions at the start of each week. Not only did I review the submissions, but I also made an effort to reach out to students who had not submitted their assignments. This proactive approach was used to try to ensure that no student was left behind and allowed me to address potential issues early on. I also tried more interactive teaching sessions, using tools like Jamboard (a digital whiteboard that lets you collaborate in real-time) or Padlet (an online Post-it wall) to foster active participation and discussion during the lessons. Such initiatives can

significantly bridge the transactional distance often experienced in online learning environments. My commitment to promptly respond to student messages (as soon as possible or on the same day) further emphasised the importance I placed on open communication, underscoring the two-way nature of our educational dialogue. In addition, I tried to focus more and more on forums, as I explained in my field notes on 27 January 2023:

There is a forum in each unit in each module. Normally, for each unit, I post the menu for the unit. But I decided I am aiming for one academic forum post each week.

“Academic” might seem very formal, but I do not want the posts to be so formal.

Instead, I want to post my thoughts about the week’s content more personally. This will serve as a bridge between the content and the student. In addition, I want to

“break open” the content for students to understand it better.

From my field notes, it is evident that I follow a very structured approach to teaching, another factor of transactional distance.

At TOGI, the programme was divided into semester courses with two intakes, one in January and one in July. In 2021, I lectured eight modules and gave considerable attention to the module guides, seeing them as essential tools that house critical information. This organisation ensures, at least in my view, that my students and I have a clear path and timelines, which I believe is crucial in reducing potential ambiguities in online learning (as seen in Figure 5.32). My focus on structure is evident in how meticulously I update dates across these modules at the beginning of the year. In my field notes of 25 January 2022, I wrote:

We focus a lot on the module guides since it includes quite a lot of information. And, of course, since we need to have all the submission dates, I need to look carefully at the academic programme for the upcoming semester (number of weeks, hours per week, etc.). Early on, I realised that this is quite important (for me). I need that framework or structure. This is my outline; from there, I plan what needs to happen each week. In addition to preparing and finalising the module guides, I also changed

all the dates. There are dates all over each module to change: In the modules guide, the summary page, the headings of each unit, the menu of each unit, the assignment name and the settings of each assignment.

Figure 5.32

An example of the structure I provided at the beginning of a 2022 unit

Unit 1 (24 January - 6 February 2022)

Restricted Available from 22 January 2022, 12:05 AM

Unit 1

In this unit, we will be focusing on the Introduction to Social Sciences, Part 1 of this module.

- **Outcome 1:** The student will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the essence, rationale and purpose of Social Sciences.

Week 1 (24 - 30 January 2022):

- Module orientation (about 1 hour)
- Teaching session on Tuesday, 25 January 2022 at 16:00 (Module orientation)
- Study the SOSC Unit 1 Resource Guide: Introduction to Social Sciences
- Videos to study: What is Social Sciences and what is the purpose of Social Sciences
- Activity 1.1. Introduction to Social Sciences I on/before 30 January 2022 (about 4 hours; time part of studying the resource guide and the videos)
 - Read the instructions for this activity before studying the resource guide and the videos.
- Forum participation (30 minutes; during the week; at least one post)

Week 2 (31 January - 6 February 2022):

- Teaching session on Tuesday, 1 February 2022 at 16:00
- Download and read: A guide to paragraph writing (about 30 minutes)
- Download and read: Basic Essay Structure (about 30 minutes)
- Activity 1.2. Introduction to Social Sciences II on/before 6 February 2022 (about 4 hours)
 - This activity will only open once the previous actions are completed.
- Forum participation (30 minutes; during the week; at least one post)

Note:

- Later you will write a test about this content. Make sure you already take notes in preparation for this test.

Forum: 1 Labels: 2 Files: 2 Page: 1 Assignments: 2 URL: 1
Progress: 3 / 7

I invested a lot of time and effort into session preparation. By deeply engaging with the content and connecting it to broader educational concepts, I have ensured that every session I have conducted is meaningful and beneficial to my students. However, as I started to engage with the theory of transactional distance, I also contemplated whether the structure I provided was too high and what the alternatives could be. I was unsure. In addition, I also contemplated my need for structure versus the students' need for structure.

One reflection that stands out to me is the balance between the responsibility I expect from my history education students and the support I provided them. I like to think I know students' unique challenges, especially those new to online learning. While I expected my students to be proactive in their learning, I also recognised the need to offer them the

necessary support to bridge any academic gaps that they might be experiencing. Therefore, I provided guidance as far as possible, either in the module or in messages. I believed in adapting my approach based on each student's unique needs and experiences, demonstrating my understanding of the intricacies of student autonomy. Evidence for this can be gleaned from the following entry in my field notes on 7 February 2023:

- Message all the students about completing the previous unit before starting with the new unit.
- Message to all the students about where to find the documents and the recording of the new lesson plan workshop we had on Saturday (sent only later today).

Many notes, such as the above, should not be necessary at the tertiary level, but where is the line between student responsibility and student support? I know the line will be different for each year group. For example, I am often more lenient for Cluster 1 students since they still find their feet in online learning and studying.

My field notes offer a window into my journey as a history and history education lecturer with online learning as the vehicle. I was deeply committed to my role and constantly strived to minimise transactional distance in online learning by aiming for active dialogue, delivering structured content, and thoughtfully fostering student autonomy. When I teach subjects like History I or History II (see Figure 5.33), I am, in my mind, not just imparting facts or dates but weaving a narrative transcending time, pedagogical best practices, and the development of historical concepts and skills.

Figure 5.33

Some of my initial planning notes for History I and II (about 2018)

History I (C10; L6) Cluster 5	History II (C10; L7) Cluster 7
<p>History of Southern Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter-gatherers and herders in Southern Africa • First farmers in Southern Africa • An African kingdom long ago in Southern Africa: Mapungubwe • Explorers from Europe find Southern Africa • Colonialization of the Cape in the 17th and 18th centuries – slavery • Cooperation and conflict on the frontiers of the Cape Colony in the early 17th century <p>Other (use of planning in subject didactics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport through time • Communication through time • Medicine through time <p>Own topic Investigation (Choose from list)</p>	<p>History of South Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local history • Heritage trail through the provinces of South Africa • Democracy and citizenship • Learning from leaders <p>History of Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ancient African society: Egypt • The Kingdom of Mali and the city of Timbuktu in the 14th century • The Transatlantic Slave Trade <p>Own topic Investigation (Choose from list)</p>
Teaching History I (C10; L6) Cluster 7	Teaching History II (C10; L7) Cluster 8
<p>A worldview of teacher Social Sciences in an African context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding ideology • Considering the Ubuntu worldview • Apply the Ubuntu-based worldview 	

Note. History I and II are modules that familiarise student teachers with the significant transformations and changes in Africa and South Africa over recent centuries, emphasising understanding, analysing, interpreting, and researching historical periods and themes such as slavery, the Industrial Revolution, and apartheid.

Whether lecturing modules like History I and History II or reflecting on the evolution and development of humans, I always find myself drawn to understanding the broader historical context. In this regard, in my field notes on 27 January 2022, I wrote the following:

I made a forum post this morning for the HIST165 students about evolution. In context, this might seem strange, especially since evolution is a topic studied in biology. But this week, we are focusing on the development of humans. When I designed this specific module (the first one to focus only on history) in 2019, I was thinking about taking a step back for students to see the bigger picture. If history covers all aspects of human society, we can also ask ourselves about the time before

humans. This is a good idea for another forum post! I also want to remind students about the notion of change. History is the study of change over time, and it covers all aspects of human society.

However, the challenge was making these historical narratives resonate with my students. Although I was very confident in my planning, instructional design and teaching, doubts were gnawing at the back of my mind. In our digital age, where information and knowledge are abundant and attention spans are dwindling, the temporal gap between historical events and the present day can feel even more pronounced. At times, I have felt this, which has raised a critical question: How can I make history relevant to my students who are so rooted in the present? In addition, there were clear thoughts on teaching history and how I reflected on this in preparation for lecturing sessions, as evident in my field notes on 3 February 2022:

I liked today's two teaching sessions, especially the last one. The first teaching (for HIST165; with no one attending, which suited me since I was late) was about the San hunter-gatherers, and the previous teaching session was about the use of 21st-century skills and the 6C's in history education. Unfortunately, one of the students could not attend since she had load-shedding during that time. Nevertheless, it was nice to prep this session, linking some of the C's (critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity) to learning theories (Bloom, Vygotsky, Dewey, Bruner) and taking it to the history classroom. It is so interesting (and alarming) that educational philosophers have advocated for this for so long. However, South Africa's way of teaching is still stuck in the way even before these philosophers lived. Where is the growth, and where is the change over the last few decades?

I needed to reflect and engage more about online learning, transactional historical distance, and my relationship with my students.

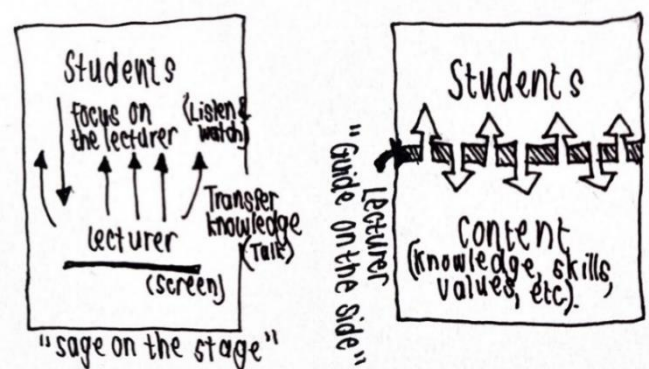
In this regard, a significant observation from my field notes was the presence of non-traditional students at TOGI. These students did not fit the typical mould of recent high school

graduates and brought a myriad of lived experience. They were often older than the default university students and lived across South Africa. In addition to the various ages and experiences, the students' home language, gender, and culture differed. This diversity turned out to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, their lived experience offered richer perspectives and interpretations of historical events. On the other hand, their commitments and responsibilities made it challenging for them to fully immerse themselves in their historical studies. Bridging this historical distance to such a diverse group required a blend of empathy, flexibility, and innovation in my teaching methods and possibly giving them a voice. Until then, I had been still teaching in a very self-assured manner.

To understand their world and its distances, I sent messages to my students, some of which touched upon events and contexts of the past. However, the responses from my students were few and far between, revealing the challenges they faced in juggling their responsibilities with the demands of understanding historical narratives and the ideas of what it meant to be a history teacher. This temporal disconnect between their present-day commitments and the historical topics I was teaching could be seen as a manifestation of historical distance. I kept wondering what my role was in how they could overcome this temporal disconnect and the manifestation of historical distance. I drew the following two images (see Figure 5.34) in my field notes on 27 January 2023 to illustrate different roles and relationships between the lecturer, students, and content.

Figure 5.34

Different roles and relationships between the lecturer, students and content



In my approach to teaching history, I have aimed to assist the students to see the bigger historical picture. By discussing topics like evolution, even though it might seem more related to biology, I wished to remind my students about the essence of history: the historical thinking skill of change over time. The message that I wanted to get across as part of the structured official formal curriculum I taught was that history is not just about events; it is about understanding the nuances of human society and its transformations. However, I sometimes felt that other subjects or priorities overshadowed the essence of history and its education. This was disheartening. In sum, I found myself in a peripheral position regarding my interactions and transactions with my students.

In my personal life, I also engaged with history when I had some time, as I did as a child in the first cabinet. An example was the heritage walking tour of Cape Town harbour that my mother, Geo Westraadt (a friend, my former art lecturer, and colleague), and I went to. This tour was a delightful dive into the historical narrative of the harbour, its landmarks, and the events that shaped it. The heritage walking tour in the Cape Town harbour was a stroll and a journey back in time in a new context – post-apartheid South Africa- and a new history that had been hidden from me as a child was revealed to me. Despite a few experiences like this, at the beginning of the academic year, on 28 January 2022, I reflected on the fact that history was not enough of a companion:

I think there isn't enough History and History Education in my life. This is what I lecture, but somehow it feels like this in the shadow, and other things keep me busy. I need to read more, write more and talk more about this. This is probably the benefit of working at a bigger institution [than mine] with more than one lecturer in the same field.

Experiences like the tour of the harbour not only enriched my historical knowledge but also offered a tangible connection to the past, bridging the historical distance that was developing in my busy life. However, such experiences also reminded me that the past is not static; it constantly evolves, shaped by the stories we tell and the memories we cherish.

Moreover, even though some historical narratives might feel distant or detached, they are intrinsically connected to our present, influencing our perspectives and decisions. This prompted me to reflect deeply on my teaching on a computer screen, what I have been doing, and the challenges I still encounter. Consequently, I decided to do things differently. I needed to find out what incoming and final year students thought and felt about history and their experiences and how it might contribute to my experienced distances.

The First-Year Students' Journey with History

I often felt the most acutely transactional and historical distances with the new, incoming students.

In a module called "Teaching and Learning in the Intermediate Phase" for all the Intermediate Phase students in the first semester of their first year, there were already experiences of transactional distance. However, transactional and historical distances are evident in semester 2 of the first year when the students start with Social Sciences. In this semester of Social Sciences, the module consists of three units: Introduction to Social Sciences, a History unit, and a Geography unit. I have often thought that these first-year students already have a perceived view of history, the purpose of history as a school subject, and how to teach history due to their prior lived experience at school via official history and more traditional pedagogy. Therefore, I wondered if these experiences and views contributed to the distances I experienced. I was also curious as to how their views influenced their experience of what I wanted them to learn and the pedagogy I used.

To understand this, all the Social Sciences students had to complete an open-ended questionnaire before the history unit started. The students were invited to participate anonymously in this study. For this reason, I used pseudonyms. Consequently, 11 out of 50 students participated in this study. I explained the purpose of my research to them. In this open-ended questionnaire, the first-year students were asked about their experiences with regard to history and history education, their feelings towards history, and their thoughts on the purpose of history education. Given the open-ended nature of these questions, the

responses I received from the 11 participants were quite diverse, each capturing a unique lived experience and views to aid me in understanding where they came from and how history was and is a companion in their lives.

It was heartening that three students expressed their genuine love, joy, and passion for learning about and writing about historical events. One student, whom I refer to as Layla, particularly emphasised the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future. They were especially captivated by the rich history of South Africa. Interestingly, all three students had chosen History as an elective until Grade 12 and had much knowledge, understanding, skills, and insights.

On the other hand, Thandiwe and Layla seemed more engrossed in the essence of history rather than the educational aspect of it. Thandiwe was quite articulate about the depth and breadth of the past, pointing out its potential to shed light on societal behaviours and elucidate the evolution of cultures and nations. By contrast, Farah seemed inclined towards the more human side of history. These students looked beyond the familiar narratives of wars and politics, focusing instead on the intricate web of human interactions and understandings. Thandiwe shared:

My experience with history has enriched my understanding of the world. It has provided me with a clear picture of societal transformations, shedding light on the beliefs, behaviours, and evolutions of various cultures. Understanding the historical context of countries and cultures has given me a unique perspective on the world and its myriad stories.

Another student, Aisha, delved into the broader significance of history in our daily lives. The student highlighted how historical knowledge had shaped her thought process, especially in her role as a teacher. Teaching methodologies in history education were a recurring theme among the students. Many shared reflections on the teaching methods they were exposed to, both in the past and in their current educational settings. Jasmin had a particularly fond memory of interactive history lessons. The students stressed the importance of critical

thinking, emphasising the necessity to authenticate sources and approach historical records with a discerning eye. It became clear that for this student, history was about absorbing information and questioning, analysing, and understanding the nuances of the past. As a lecturer, I was glad that there were students who had positive experiences and did not feel the different distances I experienced at the school level.

However, Riley, a first-year student, candidly described the experience with history as “boring”. This student reminisced about her schooling days in the 1980s, the same era as when I was in primary school, painting a picture of an era where teaching methods differed vastly from the interactive and engaging approaches she was exposed to later. She wrote the following when asked about her experience:

One word comes to mind, boring! Take into consideration that I am 50 years old and the teaching methods in 1986 were not at all what we are trying to achieve these days. Teachers stood in the front of the class and expected me to find the history content interesting without them even trying to awaken my curiosity about the past. This resulted in me not selecting it as a subject until matric. It was not until I started my own studies, 34 years later, that I got very curious about the past. I think it is the way that the subject is approached, asking questions, making you think and doing research. It is far more exciting than before.

In her words, teachers of her time did not make much effort to spark curiosity about the past, resulting in her disconnect and distancing from the subject. It was not until decades later, during her studies, that her interest in history was rekindled. The student attributed this change to the modern approach to history, which emphasises asking questions, encouraging critical thinking, and promoting research. This fresh perspective on history, the student felt, was far more stimulating than her previous experiences during the apartheid era when history focused on rote learning and memory history. Reflecting on a response like this encouraged me to keep transforming my planning and actions as a lecturer to provide students with positive and transformative experiences.

Similarly, Tasneem critiqued traditional teaching methods that heavily relied on memorisation. To him, the focus was predominantly on dates, events, and figures, without much emphasis on understanding the context and significance of historical events. He felt that proper understanding made retention easier and the subject more meaningful and engaging. On the other hand, Liam transformed his perception of history. While he initially found it distant and irrelevant, introducing visual aids and a deeper understanding of the subject's relevance changed his outlook. Accounts from students like Riley underscore the transition from older, static teaching methodologies to contemporary, dynamic, and research-centric approaches. Thus, there is an explicit acknowledgement of the evolution of pedagogical techniques and their influence on bridging the historical distance.

Jameela turned the spotlight on the history of education, a first-semester module, emphasising its crucial role in shaping the professional development of teachers. Delving into the past, especially the history of education offers invaluable insights into the educational practices and philosophies that have shaped today's pedagogical landscape.

From these student responses, it became evident that most students found value in reflecting upon and forging personal connections or bonds with the past, which is pivotal for fostering a profound understanding, a central tenet of the theory of historical distance. Engagement and interactivity emerged as key themes, with students emphasising their importance in genuinely grasping the relevance of history. This resonates with the theory of historical distance, which champions active engagement over passive memorisation.

Riley, among others, stressed the importance of cultivating a spirit of inquiry and fostering critical thinking. Such an approach encourages students to delve deeper into historical narratives and aligns closely with the theory's emphasis on analysing and understanding history from diverse perspectives.

I gathered insights from first-year students that relate closely to historical distance within history education. Many students emphasised forging personal and emotional connections with historical events. This deep emotional engagement and personal resonance with the past can bridge the gap between then and now, making historical narratives feel more

immediate and relevant. The context within which historical events occurred is paramount. Some responses underscored the idea that devoid of context, historical events might appear distant and unrelated to our present reality. However, students can bridge this perceived distance by grasping the underlying reasons for these events and understanding their broader implications. This meant that I needed to consider the context of historical events and focus on the causes and consequences of these events. In addition, I needed to consider the historical events that formed part of the content, the pedagogy used, and how to translate that into an online learning process and technological advances. Incorporating technology and multimedia into history lessons also became a vital tool for reducing historical distance. Visual mediums like films and series can breathe life into historical narratives, making them appear more tangible and real.

A recurring theme in the responses was the significance of engagement and interactivity, linking with the needed breakaway from traditional rote learning and memory history pedagogies. Instead of passively memorising dates and events, the students highlighted the value of diving deep, understanding various viewpoints, and actively engaging with the content. Such an immersive approach can provide a multifaceted understanding of the past, effectively narrowing the historical distance. In their responses, I observed a noticeable shift in teaching methodologies over time. The evolution from traditional rote-learning techniques to contemporary, research-focused, and engaging methods has profoundly impacted how students perceive historical events. These modern teaching techniques, which prioritise understanding, critical analysis, and research, have the potential to make history feel more accessible and relevant to students. Consequently, the approaches we adopt in teaching history play a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of historical distance. By championing teaching methods that foster critical thinking, encourage understanding from diverse perspectives, and promote active engagement, we can help students forge a deeper connection with history.

In summary, while the explicit term historical distance might not have frequently mentioned the responses, the essence of the responses revolved around how proximate or

distant students felt about historical events and stories. The methodologies we adopt in teaching, the ways students engage with content, and their connections to the past are all influential factors in this dynamic. When viewed through the theory of historical distance, the feedback from the students offered a rich tapestry of perspectives on history education. Their reflections underscore the significance of melding the past with the present, comprehending historical events through varied lenses, and fostering a culture of engagement and critical thinking about the past and teaching it. However, the students' responses lessened my concerns about their views and understanding of history. While some had positive experiences and others had negative experiences, they already had a sense of the purpose of history, the opportunities it could offer and how it could be more effectively taught in classrooms.

Fourth-Year Students Looking Back at Their Journey with History

To determine whether the students' experiences of transactional and historical distances evolved during their studies, I invited the final-year students to be interviewed. I wanted to determine which distances they might still encounter or how certain distances might have been bridged during their studies, especially in the history-related module. On 14 December 2021, after the modules were finalised, I interviewed four volunteering fourth-year students (two out of two from the first semester and two out of five from the last semester) and gave a pseudonym for each participating student. In these semi-structured interviews, I initially asked one question ("Tell me more about your journey with history"), but I also asked follow-up questions based on their answers.

During these interviews, the topic of transactional distance frequently emerged, either implicitly or directly. When I spoke to the students, I noticed an appreciation for a well-organised educational setup. Rania, for instance, expressed how easy it was for them to navigate the history modules after the challenging start in their first semester when online learning and using Moodle was still new. This student responded:

I knew where to find things and, to be honest with you, compared to all the other subjects, I found that they were like. History was one of them that I enjoyed a lot

because of the way it was broken down. We knew where everything was. We could find if we were not lost. We were given like everything that was required. We had dates when this was due and that was due so we could pace ourselves out ... So, Moodle itself is quite easy to use once you get to know how to use it and you become used to it.

On the other hand, Ayanda emphasised the importance of receiving good feedback from me as the lecturer and the value of open communication. These conversations showed that a structured environment combined with open dialogue could transform the distance learning experience.

The role of technology in learning was also a recurrent theme in these interviews with students about to enter the profession as history teachers. While some students voiced challenges, such as difficulty scheduling online sessions or navigating the gradebook of the LMS (Moodle®) we used at TOGI, the benefits of technology in education were unmistakable. For example, Munira shared their experience with historical series and virtual tours, highlighting how technology could make learning more immersive and bridge the perceived gaps in distance education.

Personal connections and relationships, especially with lecturers and peers, were another vital aspect that the students brought up. Seeing students' trust in the dialogue process was heartening, with many comfortable sharing personal experiences and feedback. I found some comfort that the students had positive experiences despite working hard and that their love for history was further moulded through the history and history education modules.

While discussing their learning approaches, I observed a balance between the desire for autonomy and the need for guidance. In this regard, Rania shared challenges in time management yet also expressed an evident appreciation for structured guidance. By contrast, Ayanda showcased a proactive approach to their studies, even using tools like Excel to track their progress.

Finally, the relevance of history in contemporary South Africa was a topic close to many students' hearts. They believed that engaging teaching methods, personal narratives, and contemporary practices could breathe life into historical events. The educators wanted to bridge the past and the present, helping their students to establish an emotional and cognitive connection to history.

The interviews with the fourth-year students delved deeply into the nuances of the theory of transactional distance, especially within how I was teaching history. The students' responses shed light on the importance of structure, dialogue, technology, and relevance in reducing the transactional distance in distance learning. It became clear that striking the right balance between providing autonomy and guidance, nurturing trust, and leveraging technology could substantially enhance the learning experience. The discussions illuminate how personalised teaching methods, modern educational practices, and personal connections could transcend traditional educational barriers. Emphasising the significance of building a robust structure, fostering open dialogue, and promoting student autonomy underscored the importance of bridging the psychological and communicative gaps that can arise in distance learning settings. This blend of structure, dialogue, and autonomy is pivotal in minimising the distance in education, allowing students to connect emotionally and cognitively with the past. The students confirmed that all the factors of transactional and historical distances were essential in overcoming the spaces, almost like a network of opportunities for students to succeed.

During my interviews with the fourth-year students, I also reflected on what they revealed about the theory of historical distance in history education. The discussions revealed some intriguing connections and insights, specifically highlighting how teaching methods, personal connections, and modern educational practices impacted the historical distance that they experienced.

In the interviews, Munira and Rania discussed some traditional facets of history. Rania shared their journey of studying history during their school days and their time at TOGI. The students spoke about various eras, from the Renaissance to the times of Cecil John Rhodes,

highlighting the vast chronological span of the past they had engaged with as education students. Their reflections brought forth the idea of chronological distance and how it had been a part of their educational experience. Moreover, Rania spoke about their exploration of different cultures and significant events, such as the narrative of the Khoikhoi and the ongoing cultural debates around Cecil John Rhodes. Their research on the university experiences of Muslim girls and boys, although not directly related to a History module, underscored the importance of bridging cultural distances and fostering a deeper understanding of diverse groups.

By contrast, Munira shared insights about the significance of historical places. For this student, visiting historical sites or even being aware of them brought history to life. The student believed that the gap between past and present seemed to narrow by physically connecting with the places where historical events unfolded.

When I sat down with Chennai, the interview was primarily concerned with their personal experiences and perceptions of learning history. The student recalled how history was initially found somewhat mundane during their school days. However, the student's perspective shifted dramatically during the undergraduate studies at TOGI. The student began to grasp the profound connection between the past and its influence on the present. Deep emotional reactions, mainly when we discussed sensitive topics like slavery and the treatment of individuals in bygone eras, were a testament to the student's profound connection to the subject matter. This student emphasised the role of personal experiences and emotional engagement in learning history. The student mentioned delving into their family history and studying local figures, like Shaka Zulu²¹, as methods to bridge the historical distance on a personal level. Doing so made the past more tangible and closely interwoven with their own lived experience. Munira echoed similar sentiments, sharing stories from the journey with

²¹ Shaka Zulu (c. 1787–1828) was the son of the Zulu clan chief, Senzangakona. As a youth, he joined Dingiswayo's forces and earned a reputation for reckless courage. In 1816, after his father's death, with the aid of Dingiswayo, he removed a brother from the Zulu chieftaincy and became the chief of Zululand. Shaka proved to be a military leader of outstanding genius (Adesegun & Adejo, 2016).

history. These personal narratives emphasised that forming personal and emotional connections could significantly bridge historical distance and that relatable stories and personal accounts could make historical events resonate more profoundly with students.

Moreover, Chennai mentioned an empathy map activity in which they had participated. This activity, designed to help students engage with and understand the experiences of enslaved people, further underscored the importance of empathy in bridging historical distances. By immersing students in past events, they could deeply empathise with the emotions and experiences of those who lived them.

As I delved further into my interview with Rania, the concept of educational distance took centre stage. The response revolved around various teaching methodologies, assignments, and their personal experiences with each. Rania distinguished the traditional rote-learning style and more modern, explorative, and engaging methods. This dichotomy highlighted the educational distance between old-school, traditional teaching techniques and contemporary, more interactive approaches. The teaching techniques employed can significantly influence a student's perception of history. This became evident in my interview with Chennai. Their initial disinterest in history during their early school years could be attributed to the teaching methodologies of the time, which often lacked engagement and a deeper understanding. Such approaches tended to widen the historical distance. My interviews, particularly with Ayanda, showcased a shift towards teaching methods that promote investigation, active questioning, and deeper engagement with content. This active involvement in learning enables students to bridge the gap between the past and the present, narrowing the historical distance. Munira emphasised the importance of critically reflecting on various sources, mainly textbooks. The student said textbooks were invaluable but should not be the only authority. Diversifying sources and understanding their unique perspectives is critical.

An interesting point raised by Munira was the potential of interdisciplinary learning. The student shared an instance of blending history with a mathematics lesson on the Egyptian pyramids. Such integrative approaches can make historical subjects much more engaging and

relevant. Additionally, the student stressed the importance of making history relatable to today's students, emphasising the skills gained. Relevance plays a pivotal role in the theory of historical distance. Connecting past events and our current reality can be instrumental in understanding and bridging the historical distance. Along similar lines, Rania appreciated assignments that combined theoretical knowledge with practical tasks, such as giving presentations or participating in group discussions about the relevance of teaching history in schools.

Feedback and communication were other areas the students touched upon. Rania highlighted the potential feeling of being lost in their educational journey, suggesting that effective teacher–student communication could mitigate such feelings. Similarly, Ayanda emphasised the importance of engaging with content and highlighted their evolving relationship with history. Their journey, from rote memorisation during primary school to a more immersive experience at TOGI, showcases the transformation in teaching methodologies over time. As students are given opportunities to discuss, question, and connect with historical content, the historical distance narrows, making the past more accessible and tangible.

The role of technology was another recurring theme in my discussions. Jasmine and Peter underlined the potential of multimedia, like films and series, to make history more vivid and relatable. While technology holds immense potential, it is also essential that platforms like Moodle are user-friendly. In a pervasive conversation with Ayanda, we delved deeply into the nuances of online distance learning, especially in the context of history education. The insights from this chat can be closely tied to the theory of historical distance in history education.

Aspects related to teaching methods and their influence on historical distance were also highlighted in the interviews. The interview with Chennai highlighted how teaching methods, personal connections, and modern educational practices could impact the historical distance experienced by students. By making history relatable and engaging and fostering an environment of inquiry, educators can bridge the gap between the past and present, helping students to connect emotionally and cognitively with historical events. While the interview with

Ayanda did not explicitly delve into historical distance, the themes discussed intensely affect how this theory plays out in modern, primarily online, educational settings. Transactional distance, both psychological and cognitive, can influence how students engage with history, and appropriate pedagogical strategies can bridge this distance, making historical narratives more accessible and relevant to students. Munira touched upon several related elements of historical distance in history education. This student underscored the challenges and potential solutions in making history relevant and understandable to students, emphasising the importance of personal connections, technology, and critical engagement with sources. Rania provided valuable insights into the practical implications of the theory of historical distance in education. By understanding students' experiences, lecturers can better bridge the gaps, making history more relevant and engaging for students.

The interviews elucidated the intricate bond between historical distance and the methodologies adopted in conveying historical knowledge. These interactions brought to the fore the following unified themes across the four interviews: relevance, engagement, and teaching strategies. The students identified a need to ensure that studying the past was not merely an academic exercise but a narrative that resonated emotionally. By adopting innovative teaching methods, infusing personal connections, and promoting an environment of inquiry, educators can reduce the emotional and cognitive distance students might feel towards history. Making historical events personalised and relevant is critical to engaging students and fostering a genuine connection with the past. With the shift towards online education, there are unique challenges and possibilities within modern education and the digital age. Although online platforms can sometimes introduce transactional distances, leading to potential detachment, they also offer opportunities to reduce transactional distances. By harnessing technology innovatively, lecturers can bridge the cognitive and psychological distances, making history more accessible and engaging, even in a digital environment.

Reflecting on the concept of historical distance, I have come to appreciate the complex task that lecturers face in bringing the rich tapestry of the past to life for our students.

Transactional and historical distance may cause some students to feel removed from bygone events, but I see this as an opportunity to ignite curiosity and connection. My conversations with the students reinforced that when we, as lecturers, employ empathy, creative techniques, and digital tools, we can dramatically close the gap between our students and the past. By transforming history into a dynamic and relevant narrative and fostering a culture of exploration, I am not just aiming to make the past accessible – I am cultivating a profoundly engaging and interconnected educational journey. Hopefully, history teachers will transcend the distances in their history classrooms.

Grasping the past through the students' eyes and considering their unique insights is crucial in bringing historical distance into a tangible realm. I strived to refine my approach by valuing the perspectives and feedback of my students, ensuring that history was seen not just as a distant record of events, but as an intricate web of stories with significant ties to our lives today. Moreover, I tried to turn these educational challenges into gateways for enriched understanding by nurturing a personal connection, embracing technological advancements, and promoting analytical discourse. By intertwining relevance with discovery, I can bridge the temporal divide, helping students form a more profound bond with the events that have shaped our world.

Conclusion to the Third Cabinet of Curiosity: Standing in Front of Students

In the conclusion of this third cabinet, the intricate interplay between transactional distance and historical distance is vividly laid out through my lived experience standing before students and lecturing at TOGI. The immediacy of these experiences, juxtaposed with the historical companionship of the past, paints a portrait of education as an endeavour that spans both the physical space between teacher and student and the temporal expanse between the present and the historical narratives we impart.

Reflecting upon my time as an educator and a lecturer, I recognise that my journey has been about more than just imparting knowledge; it has been a continuous dialogue with history, a subject that has been a constant companion throughout my career. The transactional

distance often experienced in contemporary education, sometimes magnified in the detachment of online teaching, was counterbalanced by the historical proximity or other experiences where the distances were less severe.

The cabinets of curiosities I have curated do more than showcase memories; they reveal the flux of history within the present and illuminate how historical distance can be navigated through personal connection and storytelling. By transforming these historical distances into intimate narratives, I have sought to make the past a palpable presence for my students, inviting them to engage with history not as a distant relic but as a living, breathing entity.

This cabinet is a testament to the power of the lived experience of transactional and historical distances and trying to understand and bridge them. I believe that by acknowledging and embracing these distances in our teaching practices, we can create a history education that is as rich and textured as the curiosities in our cabinets – where every student can find a point of connection with the stories of those who came before us, fostering a deeper, more enduring understanding of our shared human journey.

Conclusion to My Cabinets of Curiosities

In conclusion, as I reflect on my lived experience, I recognise the presence of transactional and historical distances, whether inside the formal classroom setting, online, or outside the formal educational contexts where the students grapple with connecting past narratives to their present lives or in my few personal engagements with history. However, these experiences have also underscored the importance of understanding and appreciating history in shaping our present and future.

I have reflected upon the intricate dance between the variances of transactional and historical distances and the factors that affect it within history education. I stood before my three cabinets of curiosities, looking at the content that aimed to capture my lived experience with history education. Often, I might have stood back, intentionally and sometimes unconsciously, allowing the reader to open the doors and drawers, looking around; therefore,

looking through their eyes at the content of the three cabinets, leading to more interpretations and reflections not only on my lived experience but also their own. By storing and exhibiting my data, I have aimed to unwrap my three curiosity cabinets through the lenses of the transactional and historical distances that I experienced in history education.

My journey through this exploration has been both introspective and enlightening and, at times, worrying as I delved into the personal cabinets of my curiosities, each a repository of my lived experience and educational encounters, leading to a deeper understanding of the transactional and historical distances. Throughout this chapter, I have grappled with these distances, not merely as abstract concepts but as tangible forces shaping the experience of history and history education as my companion. As I unpacked my lived experience in a radically changing South Africa, I recognised the profound impact of emotional and cognitive engagement on my connection to history. My autoethnographic account has laid bare the oscillating levels of transactional and historical distances I encountered. It has illuminated that by making history a living study, pulsating with the relevancy of the present, we can inspire a new generation to appreciate the continuum of human experiences.

In closing, I believe that the key to reconciling both transactional and historical distances lies in a pedagogical approach that is as much about cultivating emotional resonance as it is about imparting wisdom. It is about creating a dialogue between the past and the present, ensuring our stories are heard and felt. Therefore, this personal narrative has been instrumental in understanding how educators can employ innovative strategies to make history more relatable and accessible, even in the face of the digital era's impersonal veneer. One must foster a vibrant connection between the student, the lecturer, and the content. This connection is vital in transforming historical facts into stories that resonate personally, bridging the gap that time often creates. Therefore, my role extends beyond disseminating knowledge; it is about curating a learning environment that diminishes the distances that disengage the lecturer, the student, and the content. Furthermore, it fosters an educational space where past narratives are interwoven with the students' present and makes history a companion on their educational journey.

As I continue to navigate the complexities of studying and teaching history, I carry with me the lessons learned from my cabinets of curiosities, the understanding that education is not just about closing gaps – it is about connecting worlds.

In the following final room, *Sitting Around the Kitchen Table*, I share my methodological, professional, and personal reflections. In addition, I address the main research questions as part of the review of the research. Lastly, I describe my contributions to this research and present future recommendations for research and practical applications.

die skaapstrapde pad. Dit is toe dat oupa die perde hoor
en die karwiele. ^{hoor} Hy hoor die ~~die~~ ^{die} perdekar wat aankom,
die perde op 'n vinnige stap. Hy hoor ook die drie mans.
"Naad julle, Iederike weer, né?" Niemand groet nie.
"Die vrou het warm koffie, wil julle nie aankom nie?" Silie
die skaap hond kom om die hok van die kraal, steek vierpot vas
toe hy die perdekar sien en die hark reis op sy rug. Toe
gee hy 'n ^{griekse dans} ~~dans~~ in vrye staat tussen die perde die
wart op huis toe. So kyp-kyp soos iemand met groot nood.
"Wil julle nie afdim nie" vra oupa weer, ^{afdim} maar die drie donker
figure op die kar kyk nie eens na hom nie. Op 'n vinnige stap
gaan hulle verby, windop na waar die perde ramm oor
ros se wart a kom. Out vloors is die kraal. K. Totjane

Chapter 6

Sitting Around The Kitchen Table

*"History is not the past but a map of the past, drawn from
a particular point of view, to be useful to the modern
traveller."*

Henry Glassie, US historian (b. 1941)

CHAPTER 6: SITTING AROUND THE KITCHEN TABLE

Introduction to Sitting Around the Kitchen Table

This research embarked on an exploration of both transactional and historical distance in history education as it intertwined with my autoethnography. The focus and purpose was to understand the phenomenon more deeply, emphasising the factors that shaped these distances in my unique context. Through the lens of autoethnography, I sought to enhance my grasp on the elements associated with transactional and historical distances that played a pivotal role in history education in my life in a South African context. To achieve this comprehension, I retraced my history education background across two different political eras and various educational settings and reflected on the transactional and historical distances I encountered.

In my three cabinets of curiosities, the previous room, I exhibited data collection and construction through analysis and synthesis. Throughout the chapter, I have intertwined my lived experience and reflections within the broader cultural and historical context of my three cabinets of curiosities. I did this against the ethnographic setting of the changing South Africa from apartheid to the post-apartheid era, with 1994 set as a milestone in this transition.

In this chapter, *Sitting Around the Kitchen Table* (see Figure 6.1), I address the main findings based on the research questions as part of the analytical discussion of the research and then share my methodological, professional, and personal reflections. The latter is necessary since reflection is "an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, thinking about it, mull it over and evaluate it" (Boud et al., 1994, p. 19). Lastly, I present my contributions to scholarship and future recommendations for research and practical applications.

Figure 6.2

Sitting Around the Kitchen Table



Note: I have chosen Sitting Around the Kitchen Table as the name for this last chapter because the old wooden kitchen table serves as a metaphorical anchor not only for reflection but also for heartfelt conversations, engaging discussions, nostalgic reminiscing, and a space where the past, present, and future interweave seamlessly.

Review of the Research

In this section of the final room, Sitting Around the Kitchen Table, I give an overall backwards-looking review of the previous chapters by explaining what was covered and highlighting the critical features of each room. Then, I discuss the findings' significant patterns, relationships, trends, generalisations, exceptions, and likely causes. Finally, I propose answers to my two research questions.

Overall Review of the Previous Rooms

The first room, The Entry Hall (Chapter 1), initiated my autoethnographic exploration of transactional and historical distances in history education as it related to my life in the Western Cape (formerly part of the Cape Province pre-1994) of South Africa. As a history education lecturer, I expressed uncertainty about online teaching as I felt disconnected from my students. This feeling of distance persisted throughout my years as a lecturer. My experiences, over time, with South African history education shaped my perceptions of these distances, leading me to embark on this research. I employed autoethnography as my methodology, situating myself at the heart of the research. An autoethnography approach involves detailed descriptions, analyses, and reflections on my experiences and cultural and other contexts. The first room set the stage for a personal yet academically rigorous exploration of history education in South Africa.

The Lobby of my thesis (Chapter 2) marked a distinctive approach to presenting my autoethnographic journey. Contrary to the traditional thesis structure, I introduced the research design and methodology earlier in the sequence of chapters. This strategic placement was intended to guide the reader more effectively through the subsequent rooms (chapters) of my research. I laid out the philosophical underpinnings of my work, encompassing both ontology and epistemology. I elaborated on the research paradigm and approach I adopted, spotlighting autoethnography as a methodology and a tool for deep introspection and analysis. I described collecting, constructing, analysing, and interpreting data in my cabinets of curiosities. Furthermore, I detailed the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings and addressed the ethical considerations integral to my research. Thus, this chapter served as a foundational guide, offering clarity and rigour and setting the stage for a comprehensive understanding of my autoethnographic exploration.

The third room (Chapter 3), Going Down – Transactional Distance Theory and the Reading Room, explored transactional distance theory in history education. In this room, I explained the autoethnographic approach and validated the research process, emphasising meticulousness. The chapter focused on the theory of transactional distance, its integration into my exploration, and its influence on my personal experiences in history education. In this

chapter, I intertwined the theory of transactional theory with a literature review to provide a holistic view of its implications.

Like the previous room, the fourth room (Chapter 4), *Going Down: Historical Distance Theory and the Reading Room*, explored historical distance theory in history education. I discussed approaches and dimensions of historical distance and presented the theory as the second chosen theoretical and conceptual framework. The fourth room highlighted the separation between present understanding and past events, a fundamental concept for historical thinking. I emphasised the significance of historical distance in shaping educational paradigms and history education discourse.

My *Cabinets of Curiosities* room (Chapter 5) delved into the exploration of my experiences, memories, and artefacts. Inspired by traditional cabinets of curiosities, it housed various elements that assisted in my proposing an answer to my research questions. Created around three cabinets of curiosities, this fifth room addressed the factors influencing transactional and historical distances and how I experienced the effects of history education within the ethnographic setting of South Africa from 1979 until the present. The cabinets offered a unique lens for readers to navigate the complexities, transactional distances, and intertwined memories of history education.

The overview of the rooms as a metaphorical passageway leading to and from my cabinets of curiosities provided a comprehensive understanding of the chapters, their key messages, and their contributions to exploring transactional and historical distances in history education.

Looking Back at My Lived Experience of Transactional and Historical Distances in History Education

The concertina embodies transactional and historical distances as a conceptual metaphor; it also acted as a framework for this study. The concertina and how it was played metaphorically across the three pivotal cabinets of curiosities travelled concurrently with history as my companion. History and history education have been companions throughout

my life. Ebels-Hoving (2011) wrote extensively about history as her companion in her life; however, unlike her, I did not want to write personal memoirs. Instead, I used my experiences as a starting point for my autoethnography. Gradually, it became apparent as to what influence the research, as it related to formal and informal history education (and official and unofficial), had on my life. A critical question is: how was the concertina played metaphorically as I moved down the passageway through these cabinets of curiosities? In addition, how did the metaphorical concertina tunes influence my lived experience, both short-term and long-term, influence my development as a student and educator of history, and how did the played tunes change or even stay the same over time?

Transactional Distance in History Education

This research started with the theory of transactional distance to be used as a lens to explore the distances I experienced while lecturing history and history education to pre-service education students via online learning, based on the three main factors (structure, dialogue, and autonomy) that influence transactional distance (Lowe, 2000; Swart & MacLeod, 2021). However, this evolved to deal with my autoethnography as a whole.

As evident in the first cabinet of curiosities, the dialogue fluctuated when I experienced the stories and visits to the Strandveld and other Western Cape and South Africa areas, leading to my experiences of lower and higher transactional distance. On the one hand, telling stories (as my father did) was a way to increase the transactional distance due to the presence of dialogue. However, the transactional distance was also great in specific settings, mainly when no room existed for dialogue due to my age and when my father's stories were monologues, especially when more people than merely our nuclear family were around.

An important point to highlight is that although storytelling is sometimes one-sided, like my father's monologues, it played a significant role for me from a young age as a precursor of dialogue later in my life. I found that storytelling and dialogue were intricately connected, with dialogue as a fundamental tool for emotional engagement within a narrative. Storytelling and visits to related sites influence internal dialogue, which refers to the inner conversations,

reflections, and thoughts that individuals have within their minds. The internal dialogue which I had continuously when listening to my father was characterised by engagement in discussions with imagined characters, simulating social conversational interactions within my thoughts, and the interplay of different viewpoints representing various aspects of my personal and social identity (Oleś et al., 2020). The internal dialogue began in early childhood (for me, when I was a child travelling between the Strandveld and Kraaifontein). As language skills develop, they become more sophisticated and vary in complexity based on language exposure, cognitive abilities, and environment. Moore (1997) refers to the student who has internal or silent interaction with the person who, in some distant place and time (people and places in my father's stories), organises a set of ideas or information for transmission for what might be thought of as a virtual dialogue. However, internal dialogue as a factor of transactional distance (and even historical distance) has not received enough thought or research.

According to Drydon-Peterson and Siebörger (2006), South African educators' stories are often in the form of testimonies, such as in my first cabinet. The other two cabinets are vital teaching tools in shaping collective memory in educational settings and underscoring the importance of using educator testimony as an educational resource. I experienced this through my father as an informal educator, but I did not experience it in formal education settings. Drydon-Peterson and Siebörger (2006) note that despite limited academic attention, educator testimonies offer a powerful way to engage students personally while providing insights into the historical context during the relevant period. These personal narratives can connect with students on a human level, a quality often missing in historical materials and teaching methods.

Throughout the first cabinet, there was little structure due to the informal educational setting. As the parental educator, my father did not plan or aim for structure within these informal settings. However, my autonomy changed across the first cabinet. At first, my student autonomy was low due to my young age. As I got older, my autonomy increased so much that I visited places of historical significance and navigated learning about the past on my own.

However, despite some experiences of higher transactional distances due to low dialogue, the transactional distances were mainly low.

It is important to remember that although I used geographical distinctions in my first cabinet, these experiences were intertwined with the second cabinet and its formal educational setting. For example, while growing up in Kraaifontein and going to school, I listened to my father's stories about the Strandveld, and we visited people and places in the Strandveld, Cape Town, around Kraaifontein and, less often, other provinces. We tangibly experienced stories about the past in all the places we visited. The environment and experiences in the stories influenced my understanding of the past, leading to lower historical and transactional distances. This finding is supported by Dewey, who notes that transactions connote "the interplay among the environment, the individuals and the patterns of behaviors in a situation" (Boyd & Apps, 1980, p. 5).

My lived experience of school as a formal educational space was stored and exhibited in the second cabinet. The transactional distance was the furthest in the history classroom at primary school. Although the structure might be perceived as high, there was little dialogue and autonomy in the history lessons, leading to ineffective or disheartening internal dialogue. Fortunately, the transactional distance was near when we focused on art history, a part of the subject of Art, in high school. Despite the higher structure due to the formal school setting and curriculum, the dialogue and autonomy I experienced while studying art history were higher than in the history classroom. When I started to study to become an educator, my experiences of new perspectives of teaching history due to a new curriculum and the insights of my history lecturer, the history lecturer's pedagogical approaches, more dialogue (including positive internal dialogue), and my growing autonomy led to the decrease of transactional distance.

Noteworthy of my third cabinet of curiosities was my change of position from student to educator and lecturer in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, any experience of transactional distance was from the stance of an educator and lecturer, but in a very different socio-political context from the one in which I grew up. This put me in a position where I felt distances and did what I could to increase or decrease any distance between me and the history education

students. Naturally, I learned how nuanced distances were before I started this research, and I realised that I first had to understand the distances before increasing any distance.

At times, history and history education were not firm companions in my own formal educational settings since I did not teach it at the school level while teaching at Tulbagh High School. Fortunately, during the same period, I did my BEd Honours with History as the main elective. At times, when I taught history at the school level, history was a distant, informal companion. Even when I lectured at CPUT before working at TOGI, history was a companion to a certain degree since I lectured social sciences to Foundation Phase students due to the interconnectedness of History and Geography.

Outside the formal educational setting, history remained my companion due to the continuation and overlapping of features from the first cabinet. As part of a family, I was still part of conversations about the past, listened to my father's stories, and visited places of historical significance. In addition, I was surrounded by the past as a result of where I lived, in Tulbagh and Wellington, and while visiting my parents on the farm in the Strandveld.

When I started lecturing History and History Education to the initial education students at TOGI, the geographical distance was near, so the dialogue was much easier due to the face-to-face settings within a blended mode of delivery. The perceived transactional distance was lower because of this specific educational setting despite a higher degree of structure and different levels of student autonomy. As TOGI transformed into a fully online mode of delivery, the structure became even higher to effectively mediate teaching, learning, and assessment and to support the students in navigating the learning process and overcoming any possible dialogical and autonomy challenges.

As captured in my three cabinets of curiosities, with my lived experience in each cabinet and by virtue of the cultural and socio-political context within each cabinet, I experienced varying degrees of transactional distance. At times, the transactional distance was near, and at times, it was far away. However, some factors of transactional distance affected the transactional distance more than others. First, dialogue was vital in the form of interactivity and communication in the learning process. The quality and nature of interactions

in the learning environment, between the educator and students, and dialogue between students impacted transactional distance. The consistency, depth, and quality of these interactions played a pivotal role in determining whether they lessened or aggravated the transactional distance experienced by students. Dialogue was also an essential contributor to historical distance through engagement and the use of language to develop historical literacy.

The concept of student autonomy was paramount. The degree to which students similar to me in my first and second cabinets of curiosities felt empowered and in control of their learning significantly affected the transactional distance when the students had a sense of autonomy, as I had when I grew older. In my first cabinet, during Art History lessons and while studying to become a teacher, I had a meaningful say in my education. The heightened autonomy I sometimes experienced fostered deeper engagement and affinity with the past, significantly reducing the perceived transactional distance. The opposite was true where there was no autonomy, especially in formal educational settings such as in my primary school history classes.

Effective learning about the past can happen without structure, especially in informal settings, as in my first cabinet, where I engaged with the past by listening to stories and visiting places of historical significance. However, effective learning about the past can happen with greater structure when a well-designed course features clear outcomes, comprehensive feedback mechanisms, and effective teaching methods, as I experienced in Art History and while studying to become a teacher. Careful structuring should give clear guidance, sustained support, and a sense of purpose to foster a more profound engagement with the past, the educator, and course material. Consequently, I attempted to use these features while lecturing History and History Education at TOGI to reduce transactional distance. In this regard, Sevnarayan (2022) highlights that although Moore (1993) has argued that a high structure limits the responsiveness of the module to the student's needs and preferences, which, in turn, increases transactional distance, other researchers have found that a high structure can increase dialogue between students and decrease transactional distance (Sevnarayan, 2022). From this research and the various levels of structure I experienced in

history education, it is clear that transactional distance can increase in both high and low-structural education settings.

I want to highlight several other significant factors that influenced transactional distance and did not receive enough attention in the literature on transactional distance. Compared to my metaphorical analogy of a concertina, different tunes were played not only across my three cabinets of curiosities but even within each cabinet. One factor influencing transactional distance was the differential lived experience of informal (first cabinet) and formal educational (second and third cabinets) settings and the level of structure, dialogue, and autonomy within each. This differential lived experience of informal and formal education led to two questions: What happened regarding historical and transactional distances in informal settings? What happened regarding historical and transactional distances in formal settings? There was a clear distinction between the informal experiences of the first cabinet and the formal experiences of the second cabinet, leading to tension between the experiences of the first cabinet and the school history in the second cabinet.

As seen in the first cabinet of curiosities with its low structured and informal settings, historical and transactional distances were lower. The past came alive through storytelling and more visual and concrete experiences due to the visits to places with historical significance. In this informal setting, history as a companion was born, and it developed to such a degree that it became a significant part of my life. By contrast, the historical and transactional distances experienced, especially in primary school History, were higher due to the formal setting, the abstract nature of the past, how the educator taught it, and the disregard of previous informal educational settings. Fortunately, my companionship with the past was rekindled through Art History at high school. Based on my relationship with history in the informal setting of the first cabinet, I struggled to continue building a relationship with history in the formal setting, as exhibited in the early parts of the second cabinet.

In the third cabinet, I stood before the students or sat behind a laptop screen while teaching and lecturing in formal educational settings. From this point of view and my lived experience of former and various informal and formal education settings, I aimed to navigate

and mediate the teaching and learning process. While experiencing transactional distance and getting lost in the technological intricacies and possibilities, there were also distinct historical distances, which I discuss in the next section.

In our contemporary, digitally-driven era, the role of technological tools in increasing transactional distance and shaping history education is central. The effectiveness, appropriateness, and efficiency of digital resources can significantly impact a student's connection or detachment from history, which, in reality, is already abstract because of the subject's temporal nature. However, well-designed and deployed tools can enhance students' immersion and engagement, reducing transactional distance. I experienced this at TOGI, where technology significantly mediated teaching and learning. On the other hand, technological tools that fall short of meeting students' needs and do not contribute to effective teaching and learning can unintentionally introduce hurdles, heightening the perceived gap between the student and the content and, consequently, the student and the educator.

As educators, we also need to consider the students' present lived experiences that significantly influence their transactional distance in a subject such as History. As adult students in an online learning context, their level of technological skills, life circumstances, personal health issues, job demands, or family concerns substantially sways their capacity to engage fully with the content. According to Moore (1997), other environmental factors influence dialogue and, thus, transactional distance. These include the number of students each educator must provide instruction to and the frequency of opportunity for communication, usually determined by administrative and financial constraints; the physical environment in which the students learn; and the emotional environment of students. These constraints were evident at TOGI, where there were students from very diverse environments where some students could not be online as frequently for online learning activities and communication, not only due to direct financial constraints but also to indirect financial constraints since most students had to work to be able to pay for their studies. Such immediate situations can bridge or widen the transactional distance, impacting the educational experience. However, based on my experiences at TOGI and the diverse, often complex, and challenging circumstances

in South Africa, students' present lived experience that influences their transactional distance need more research attention.

Historical Distance in History Education

In this autoethnography, I found that history influences transactional distance. Not only has Moore (2018) pointed out that the subject influences transactional distance, but Moore (1997) also points out that there is room for more than one theory. Consequently, I included historical distance as an additional lens to investigate transactional distance. However, not only does historical distance stand alongside transactional distance, but it also influences it, thus leading to another set of factors that influence the metaphorical notes played, either successfully or not, by my conceptual concertina. Based on my lived experience with history as a companion, as captured in this autoethnography, I found that looking at transactional distance through the lens of historical distance led to the inclusion of several other factors that were not considered previously. Among these were temporal distance and engagement with the past, unofficial and official history, types of history, pedagogical approaches in history education, historical literacy, and the history teacher and student. This section discusses the main findings related to these factors as they relate to my autoethnography.

Temporal distance and engagement are factors that influence historical distance. My engagement with the past, detailed in my first cabinet of curiosities, was shaped by my family stories and visits. These experiences varied in temporal distance, connecting me to history, from family narratives to broader regional and national histories. This exposure greatly influenced my understanding of history, evolving from intimate personal stories to broader contexts like Cape Town's history, which I experienced first-hand during visits. When I was young, my historical engagement initially had a low transactional distance, but as I grew up, it expanded to include dimensions like historical consciousness, language, and source or evidence analysis.

In my second cabinet, I explored my school history and educator training years, revealing how the education system shaped my engagement with the past. During my primary

school years, history education in South Africa emphasised Afrikaner Nationalist history. This ideology was lacking in inclusivity (for example, Black people only appeared on the periphery as troublemakers to White society) and multiple perspectives. Rote learning and memorisation dominated my learning at primary and middle school, limiting my critical engagement with the subject. By contrast, despite the temporal distance, Art History at high school offered me a more engaging and personal connection to the past, emphasising societal and political contexts, amongst others. When I started the study to become an educator in 1998, four years after the end of apartheid in 1994, the introduction of a new school curriculum led to a shift toward a student-centred approach, transforming my perspective on history education. Reflecting on these experiences, I recognised the contrast between official school history and the inclusive, personal view of history gained through art history and during my educator training. While Grever et al. (2012) underscored distance in history as a configuration of time and engagement, my journey has highlighted the importance of interacting and engaging with history education, bridging the distance between past and present, and educator and student.

In my final cabinet of curiosities, I delved into my role as an educator as a History and Social Sciences Education lecturer at TOGI, where my focus shifted towards interacting with students in an educational setting. At TOGI, I played a significant role in curriculum development, emphasising content, strategies, and technology to cater to the students' needs, particularly in online learning. This role represented a departure from my previous personal and academic engagements with history. There, the primary consideration shifted from my historical distance and engagement with the past to that of the students. Therefore, my involvement at TOGI involved deep engagement with curriculum development, content selection, and strategic planning, all aimed at addressing the specific requirements of the students, especially in online education. In sum, I was an influencer of historical distance.

Concerning the above, historical distance is not only conceptualised as the configuration of temporality; it also refers to the configuration of engagement, which can occur on the level of affection, moral commitment, or ideology (De Bruijn, 2014; Grever et al., 2012). However, as seen in my second cabinet of curiosities, where various temporal distances were

evident, engagement with the past, despite the temporality, played a significant role in bridging (through art history) or not bridging (through school history) the historical distance. Thus, engagement can be employed to bridge (or not) the temporal distance. Temporal distance is a defining characteristic of historical work, but in practice, historical distance is always a much-mediated construction (Phillips, 2004).

Core to my findings regarding historical distance is the presence and influence of unofficial or official history. A blend of unofficial and unstructured history marked the first cabinet of curiosities. In the Strandveld, the historical accounts lacked a formal structure, and much of the history was passed down through the oral tradition and anecdotes in the form of storytelling and through visits to places with local historical significance, many a time related to the stories. On the other hand, Cape Town and its surrounding areas had more official historical records due to its colonial past. However, unofficial and less documented stories were intertwined by my father into the official narrative, creating a rich tapestry and nuanced view of the past. Beyond the Western Cape, history leaned more towards official history, but traces of unofficial history were still present, adding depth, complexity, and texture to the historical narrative.

By contrast, as conveyed in the second cabinet of curiosities, school history, which I studied as a compulsory subject until Standard 9 (now Grade 7) in 1994, the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa, was characterised predominantly by official history with historical accounts that were well-documented and organised, providing a one-sided perspective and understanding of the events and developments of the past and of that time – apartheid and colonial South Africa transitioning to post-apartheid South Africa. To a large extent, school history continued with this one-sided official historical narrative despite the radical changes at that time, leading to tensions between the one-sided official historical narrative and unofficial accounts from multi-perspective apartheid narratives within a conflicted post-conflict society. I have experienced art history questioning these official narratives. We investigated the past through the eyes of individuals, leading to more nuanced and differentiated views and perspectives of the past. The confinement of one-sided official

history changed after 1994 when South Africa became a democracy, and changes were implemented in school history and teacher training. Consequently, in 1998, when I joined the Boland College of Education in Wellington as a student, there was already a deviation from the one-sided official Afrikaner Nationalist history taught to me in primary school.

Like the second cabinet, the third cabinet of curiosities presented a unique tension between official history and the influence of unofficial narratives. This cabinet, while I was lecturing, was marked by an ongoing struggle between the master narrative of the curriculum, which aimed to establish an authoritative historical account, and the unofficial stories of myself as an educator and my students that challenged this autoethnographic narrative, by focusing, for example, on pre-colonial history that was primarily omitted before 1994, oral history, family history, local history, and cultural history from various perspectives. This tension added a layer of complexity to the lived experience of lecturing as it forced me to critically examine the official and unofficial history I grew up with and was immersed in, officially and unofficially, to piece together a more nuanced view of preparing students for pre-service education. Taylor and Young (2004) support my findings by stating that students often face a conflict between community-based histories and standardised school history, with their personal stories offering unique insights that challenge official narratives and influence their understanding of the past.

Reflecting on my journey of moving between the different rooms to the tunes of the omnipresent metaphorical concertina and looking at the different cabinets, I wanted to explore my experiences with different types of histories. I recognised how my experiences with the different types of history had shaped my understanding of the past and influenced transactional and historical distances. As captured in my cabinet of curiosities, my experiences of the first cabinet were a rich blend of local, social, family, regional, and national histories. My father's storytelling, blending local folk tales, family stories, and historical events, provided a vivid, personal, and even tangible view of history. These stories, often shared during formal and informal family gatherings, encompassed the lives of ordinary people, family members, neighbours, the Afrikaners, local community events, and even the supernatural. Our visits to

historical sites complemented these stories, adding tangible dimensions and broader past perspectives. These excursions exposed me to broader perspectives, integrating traditional and nationalist views of history. This journey was not just limited to family stories but also included elements of social, cultural, and unofficial histories, weaving together local customs, regional events, and national histories into a multifaceted view of the past. This part of the cabinet went beyond mere family narratives, incorporating social, cultural, and unofficial histories, which helped shape my perceptions of the past. This narrative was enriched by insights, through my father's stories, into Afrikaner Nationalism, colonial history, the impacts of apartheid, and even indigenous knowledge and practices. My experience highlights how personal biases, language, and cultural backgrounds shape perceptions of the past, blending factual events with personal interpretations and playing itself out in creating (or not) historical distance. Overall, my lived experience in the first cabinet underscores the development of historical literacy, illustrating how storytelling, site visits, and dialogue contributed to a deeper understanding and interpretation of the past.

By contrast, my formal historical education during my school years was deeply rooted in the national and cultural nature of Afrikaner history, focusing on significant events like the Great Trek and the arrival of the DEIC as sacrosanct events. I also learned about critically important colonial figures, adding layers to my understanding of South Africa's colonial past in a one-sided manner devoid of a truthful African presence. Later, I had the opportunity to critically reassess the history I was taught at primary school. While school history focused on national and cultural history, art history provided a different lens through which to understand historical contexts. Through art history, for example, I learned about township art and artists who questioned apartheid policies due to the inhumane treatment of some South Africans. It offered me new insights into socio-economic, cultural, and political circumstances, often capturing nuances that traditional historical narratives might have overlooked.

In the third cabinet of curiosities, I delved into and embraced various types of history to equip pre-service education students with the skills needed to teach history effectively to Intermediate Phase students (Grades 4 to 6 and Grade 7). My teaching journey over four

years focused on the Intermediate Phase curriculum for Social Sciences. This journey was enriched by weaving in personal, family, local, cultural, and regional history narratives, along with national, pre-colonial, African, and aspects of global history. I realised that these diverse historical perspectives were crucial for embracing different viewpoints and methodologies in studying history. Each type of history I introduced into the classroom offered a unique lens through which history could be understood, contributing significantly to the students' historical literacy development. My approach aimed at bridging the gap between transactional and historical distances, ensuring that the past was not just a series of events to be memorised but a tapestry of stories and perspectives that resonated with the students on a personal level, leading to an increase in historical as well as transactional distance.

Personal memories, family histories, and cultural backgrounds shape how we perceive history. Autoethnographic narratives blend these elements into historical contexts, making history more tangible. An individual's unique cultural and personal history, for example, my cultural and personal history as presented in this study, influences their connection to educational content, affecting the perceived distance in learning. Cultural ties reduce historical detachment, especially when students see their heritage in the events they are studying. A person's cultural and familial background profoundly influences their relationship with history. For example, a student with a family history of war veterans may feel a stronger connection to war-related courses. Past experiences with technology can also impact this distance. Understanding students' past experiences enriches our understanding of their historical perspective. Personal and family histories bring historical events closer, like a student with ties to the apartheid era in South Africa through their parents or grandparents. By contrast, Moore (2018) only referred to the influence of cultural differences between educators and students on dialogue and, consequently, on transactional distance.

By analysing my journey (represented by the different cabinets of curiosities) through the lens of historical literacy and blending it with transactional and historical distance, I realised how my engagement with history has evolved. My analysis related to historical literacy is primarily based on the work of Maposa and Wassermann (2009) and my concertina theoretical

and conceptual framework. The first cabinet delved into my personal history and its influence on my historical literacy. This cabinet was abundant in historical content, combining my family stories with significant social and national historical events. It showed how narratives intertwined with historical events provide insights into the socio-historical context of events like colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. Historical source work was exemplified through oral history, personal memories and tangible visits, leading to exposure to the use of historical language and the development of historical understanding and consciousness. This first cabinet was deeply personal, rich in narratives and visits, and illustrated how my personal and family stories planted a seed and the development of historical understanding and consciousness, leading to the development of historical literacy.

By contrast, the second cabinet of curiosities focused on school history, art history, and educator training, revealing a starkly different experience of historical literacy compared to the first cabinet of curiosities. The historical content is school history focused primarily on Afrikaner Nationalist historiography, highlighting a nationalistic bias in the curriculum. This second cabinet exhibited a limited understanding and development due to the one-sided nature of the history I was taught, lacking diversity, inclusivity, understanding, awareness, and historical consciousness. The teaching methods were focused on rote learning, with no engagement with diverse sources or critical analysis, resulting in constrained historical consciousness, further heightened by biased language and terminology aligning with the nationalistic narrative prevalent during the apartheid era.

While exploring the second cabinet, I discovered that art history played a crucial role in forming and even reshaping my understanding of the past, setting it apart from my earlier experiences of school history. By then, the new post-1994 South Africa had arrived, and the teacher was offering valuable historical insights into past cultures, societies, and individuals by using artworks as examples of source work. Art history aided me in understanding the past as it served as a visual record, reflecting the beliefs, values, and social structures of individuals and societies that produced the art. By engaging with art history, I gained a deeper

appreciation of historical context, tracking the evolution of art, cultural expressions through visual media, and the role of art in communicating and representing history.

Art history facilitates a richer understanding of the cultures, societies, and individuals shaping history through art. It serves as a powerful and tangible link to the past, making history more accessible and relatable for contemporary students and, thus, a significant contributor to the development of historical literacy. Artworks originate in different historical periods and locations where they are observed and studied. Despite the temporal distance, art history bridged transactional and historical distances by enabling me to engage and connect with the past through the artworks, shedding light on these works' cultural and historical context.

The third cabinet of curiosities, which detailed my experience as an educator and lecturer, showed a significant evolution in my relationship with historical literacy and the inclusion of historical literacy and the development thereof in the training of student teachers. In this cabinet, primarily while lecturing in History and History Education, I had to move beyond the traditional notions of rote learning by including the development of historical understanding and consciousness by working with sources and developing historical language skills. Here, I demonstrated an effort for deep engagement with historical content by emphasising an understanding of the broader historical context and the interconnectivity of past, present, and future. This third cabinet was marked by my use of diverse methodologies, highlighting critical sources and diverse perspectives. As a result of my prior experiences, captured in the first two cabinets, I aimed to connect content with broader historical narratives, making history relevant and accessible for my students. However, the different levels of the students' historical literacy came to be challenging since they had still experienced traditional notions of rote learning at the school level. Their view of the past, therefore, still clouded their perspectives, leading to tensions between their opinions and the new insights provided while studying to become history teachers. Despite my own school history experience that could have led to similar tensions when I started to study to become a teacher, my other experiences with history as a companion and other pedagogical tools, either within informal or formal

settings, led to there being no tension between my opinions and my new insights into history education.

The educator was another factor that emerged as a significant contributor to transactional and historical distances. My father was my primary informal educator during my childhood, instilling a deep appreciation for history through his storytelling and taking us to places of historical significance. His tales and visits, rooted in the Strandveld region where he grew up and the broader South African historical landscapes, were more than just stories; they were non-formal lessons that shaped my understanding of the past. His approach made history tangible and personal, effectively decreasing transactional and bridging historical distances.

However, during my formal schooling, the curriculum shifted to emphasise Afrikaner Nationalism, and the role of the educators changed significantly. This one-sided approach to history education, delivered by one-dimensional teachers devoid of multiple perspectives and punctuated by traditional teaching methods, aligned with the apartheid system's policies and broadened transactional and historical distances. The role of the art history educator, by contrast, stands out as markedly different and more favourable because he provided a contrasting experience to the primary school history lessons and offered a sense of belonging and a platform for self-expression. The teaching approach in art history involves a dynamic exploration of the past, delving into the lives of artists, their work, and various art forms, covering periods from ancient history to more recent times. This striking difference in teaching methodologies between art history and other subjects underscored for me the value of being exposed to engaging and inclusive educational practices, which in turn served to reduce transactional and historical distances.

During my educator training, the post-apartheid introduction of Curriculum 2005 in South Africa marked a significant shift in the educational landscape, profoundly influencing lecturers' approaches. This new curriculum, which was distinctly different from the traditional curricula, strongly emphasised student-centred pedagogy to enhance the overall quality of education. It was designed to foster the development of students into critical and creative

thinkers capable of actively and productively contributing to South Africa's development. Lecturers facilitated activities promoting these vital analytical skills and creative thinking, including brainstorming, analysis, and data interpretation, fostering diverse perspectives and effective dialogue, and increasing transactional and historical distances. The history lecturer encouraged us to look at the past in various ways and, among other things, to ask questions about what happened, to question what was known as the truth, to wonder about people and motivation, what the causes and consequences of events were, about change, significance, stereotyping, and bias. These changes signalled a move towards more inclusive, analytical, and student-focused educational reform, significantly affecting the training and methodology of future educators in South Africa.

As a lecturer at TOGI, I sought to bridge these distances, creating an engaging and reflective environment for a diverse student body. This required innovative teaching methods, empathy, and flexibility, reflecting a shift from being a recipient of biased education to a facilitator of a more inclusive understanding of our past. I mark this period as a significant evolution in my role as an educator. It was a transformative journey that challenged me to adapt my teaching style to meet my student's unique needs, embrace diverse perspectives, and foster an atmosphere of respect and open dialogue. In doing so, I witnessed remarkable growth in my students' understanding of history and felt a profound sense of fulfilment in helping to shape a more inclusive educational experience.

Each educator is influenced by their lived experience and contextual environment, thus shaping them and their behaviours. On looking back at my cabinets of curiosities, it is clear to me that the influences of my lived experience and how it shaped me as a history educator and lecturer are also valid for me. According to Moore (1991, 1997, 2018), the extent and nature of dialogue as a factor of transactional distance is determined by each educator's personality and social, emotional, psychological, and philosophical characteristics. The educator's personality and characteristics lead to greater or less distance (Moore, 1991). However, when we think about the personality and characteristics of a history educator, the research on transactional and historical distances did not dig deeper into what influences personality and

characteristics and what role the lived experience in history education plays in developing a personality or characteristic of the history educator. For example, a history educator's interest and passion for history often stems from their experiences, leading to a more enthusiastic and engaging educator. Positive and negative educational experiences of history students can shape history teachers' teaching philosophy, approach, and methods. Looking at my journey and development as a history educator, my interest and passion started during the first cabinet of curiosities with my father as an inspiring educator. Later, my art educator and history lecturer strengthened my interest and passion for history.

Personal family history and stories passed down through generations can profoundly impact a history educator's understanding of history, as it did in my case. I have found that integrating these family narratives into my teaching made history more relatable and engaging for my students. Additionally, my cultural background and heritage have shaped my historical perspective, allowing me to offer unique insights into certain events and periods. However, I have realised that exposure to diverse cultural, educational, and societal experiences and perspectives can gradually evolve and expand my beliefs over time, enriching my teaching.

Moreover, my personal experiences, including my challenges and adversity, have made me a more empathetic and understanding educator. I have learned to connect historical events to the human experiences of the past, enabling me to help my students grasp the emotional and social aspects of history. Drawing from my experiences in other fields, such as literature, art, and geography, I have developed an interdisciplinary approach to teaching history. This approach allows for a more holistic view of historical events, encouraging students to see history as a dynamic interplay of various factors.

Lastly, my passion for travel and exploration has given me first-hand knowledge of historical sites and artefacts. Incorporating these experiences into my teaching allows me to offer real-world context and share personal anecdotes about historical events and places. This makes history more tangible and instils a deeper appreciation for the richness of our collective past.

Research like Taylor and Young's (2004) study highlights the role of the history educator despite no mention of transactional and historical distances. As in my findings, Taylor and Young also note that an educator's approach to teaching history is shaped by their personal and professional experiences, knowledge of the subject and pedagogy, beliefs about students, their backgrounds, and the purpose of teaching history. Educators' perceptions of their students, influenced by beliefs about their characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and academic abilities, significantly affect the learning environment and teaching practices. These perceptions help educators create academic and behavioural profiles for students, guiding them to customise teaching and learning experiences to suit individual needs.

As captured in my three cabinets of curiosities, the pedagogical approaches in history education demonstrate a significant evolution in my teaching and learning of history, reflective of the varying contexts and times. In the first cabinet, the focus was on oral storytelling, primarily through the narratives shared by my father. This approach is immersive and personal, centred around sharing lived experiences rather than structured educational formats. How my father told his stories – history – is brought to life as a series of relatable tales intricately woven with family stories and local community insights. Looking back at my own experiences of listening to stories, it is clear that storytelling as a learning mode fosters an emotional and personal connection to the past, moving beyond the traditional focus on dates and events. Unlike formal educational methods like rote learning, the storytelling approach in the first cabinet of curiosities is experiential and rich in context, drawing deeply from the history of the Strandveld region and the diverse backgrounds within the Afrikaner community.

The second cabinet of curiosities presents a shift to more formal educational methods, mainly influenced by the political and educational climate of Afrikaner Nationalism during my school years. This period was characterised by an emphasis on rote learning, where the focus was primarily on memorising significant dates, events, and figures in Afrikaner history. Such an approach, while structured, created a sense of disconnection for me, leading to my decision to discontinue studying history at a higher grade. The traditional approach to history education

in school was rigid and lacked engagement and critical thought. However, my experience with art history during this time offered a stark contrast. Moving away from the confines of rote learning, art history provided a more engaging and exploratory approach to understanding history. This method highlighted the importance of context, encouraged critical thinking, and opened the door to exploring history from diverse perspectives. When I started to study to become an educator in 1998, I experienced the introduction of a new school curriculum, which significantly transformed the approach to social sciences and how to teach. This new curriculum emphasised the dynamic relationships between people and their environments, aiming to make history more relatable and engaging for students. It encouraged an inquiry-based learning approach, fostering active student engagement and critical thinking. This transition shifted education towards a more student-friendly, interactive, and contextually relevant education system. My journey through this evolving educational landscape emphasised the importance of adaptability and reflective teaching to effectively navigate change and enhance the educational experience in history education.

In the third cabinet of curiosities, as an educator at TOGI, my pedagogical approach showed a clear progression. Here, I focused on crafting engaging, structured, and interactive online learning experiences. This contemporary approach to teaching history combined the structured guidance typical of formal education with the flexibility and accessibility of online learning. It emphasised critical thinking, student engagement, and the use of technology to bridge the gaps often found in online education. This method departed from rote learning, encouraging students to actively participate, engage in dialogue, and form personal connections with historical narratives. Adaptable to the diverse needs of modern students, this approach aims to make history both relevant and accessible, reflecting the changing landscape of education and student needs. Overall, the pedagogies across the cabinets transitioned from immersive, narrative-driven learning to traditional and structured methods, culminating in a dynamic, interactive, and technologically adept approach. Each cabinet showcased a distinct historical, educational methodology influenced by the context, educational goals, and the evolution of teaching and learning paradigms.

Narrative techniques, media, and textbooks are closely linked to pedagogical approaches that influence transactional and historical distances in history education. The narrative techniques used to present history also influence historical distance. The methodologies employed to recount historical events can make them feel relatable or remote. For instance, incorporating personal anecdotes, testimonies, or first-hand accounts can make historical events feel more tangible and immediate, effectively narrowing historical distance. The representation of historical events in media and textbooks also significantly affects how they are perceived. How these events are portrayed, whether in popular media, like films and television shows or educational resources, can modulate their perceived distance. Certain portrayals might amplify their relatability, while others might inadvertently distance them from the students.

In conclusion, my lived experience in history education vividly illustrates the fluid interplay of transactional and historical distances. This journey, from the emotionally rich history of my youth to the more abstract approach in early formal education, has not only deepened my understanding of history but also reshaped my role as an educator. It emphasises bridging these distances to create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. My experiences highlight the significant influence of history on transactional distance, underscoring the need for educators to foster a balanced and meaningful connection with history. Exploring historical distance alongside transactional distance has revealed additional factors such as engagement with the past, various types of history, pedagogical approaches, historical literacy, and the dynamics between the history teacher and student. These elements, integral to understanding the metaphorical notes played by my conceptual concertina, point to the complex yet crucial nature of historical and transactional distances in shaping educational experiences.

Professional and Personal Reflections on the Research

Exploring transactional and historical distances in history education by means of autoethnography has been enlightening and transformative. Reflecting on my professional journey, I realise how dynamic and evolving my role as a history lecturer has become. Each year, each semester, and even after each lesson, I have adapted and improved my practice. This adaptability is crucial in history education, where knowledge and societal contexts are constantly evolving. Being in the 21st century, with students changing continuously, I have learned the importance of not doing things the same way. Technology has significantly aided this approach, although I have also encountered barriers that it presents.

My exploration into transactional and historical distance in history education has been particularly transformative. It opened doors towards my deep understanding of these concepts, allowing me to integrate them into my teaching. Understanding these distances and reflecting on my life, background, and history as my companion and the broader cultural setting has been a starting point for developing a comprehensive approach to teaching history.

My journey is unique, as is each student's, and this understanding shapes how I approach my role as an educator. I am always trying to improve, to cross these educational distances, and to prepare students as future teachers to do the same. The school History curriculum and teacher training offer many opportunities to integrate these concepts, which I continuously explore.

Before my research, I was unaware of the factors influencing historical and transactional distance. This research has been crucial for my professional development. It has shown me the importance of research in academic fields and how it contributes significantly to what educators do. This process of research and reflection has also been a journey of self-discovery, reaffirming my belief in the power of history education.

Reflecting professionally, I see a clear alignment with my journey as a history educator. My upbringing in Kraaifontein, South Africa, has profoundly influenced my approach to history education. Coming from a modest background, I learned to appreciate the complexities of

history, especially in a country marked by its apartheid past. This personal history has been instrumental in shaping my professional ethos.

My career in education, fuelled by the inspiring influence of my primary school teachers, has made me deeply aware of the lasting impact that educators can have on their students. As a teacher, I recognise the power I hold to influence young minds. This is a responsibility I take seriously, aiming to impart not just knowledge, but also a sense of critical thinking and empathy towards different cultural and historical contexts.

The challenge of being a White Afrikaans educator and lecturer in post-apartheid South Africa has only heightened my awareness of the need for inclusivity and respect in the classroom. I strive to present history in a way that is both authentic and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of my students.

While conducting this research, I presented papers at three national research conferences in South Africa, which helped me conceptualise certain aspects of this research and critically engage with other experts. The 36th South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT) conference was held in Genadendal, a small Moravian mission station in the Western Cape, in September 2023. The title of my presentation was "Exploring transactional and historical distances in history education: An autoethnography", in which I focused mainly on my first cabinet of curiosities. I also presented two papers in 2023. The first presentation was at the annual Education Association of South Africa (EASA) conference, which was held in January 2023 at Century City, Cape Town. This conference was jointly hosted by the CPUT and TOGI. The presentation title was "Looking beyond technology: Exploring transactional and historical distances in history education", during which I focused more on my second cabinet of curiosities. The last presentation was at the 37th South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT) conference in October 2023 at the University of Johannesburg. The title of this presentation was "Growing up with history: Exploring the lived experience of a history educator and lecturer". The presentation focused on the different types of history I encountered in my first and second cabinets of curiosities and the consequent transactional

and historical distance due to the vast differences between formal and informal history and unofficial and official history.

In addition, I have had critical conversations since 2020 with my supervisor, Prof. Johan Wassermann from the University of Pretoria, via Google Meet meetings – a mere 1 411 km between the University of Pretoria and Wellington in the Western Cape. Between the online sessions, we also had a few face-to-face meetings.

In my professional practice, I have questioned traditional teaching methods, mainly rote learning, and the limited scope of history often presented in curricula. I aim to create a learning environment where history is not just a subject about the past but a lens through which students can understand their present and future. This involves integrating local histories and perspectives, making the history more tangible and relevant.

My role as a history educator extends beyond imparting knowledge. It is about bridging the past together with the present, helping students to understand their place in the world, and fostering a sense of shared humanity. This reflection has reinforced my belief in the transformative power of education. It is about teaching historical events and shaping empathetic, informed individuals who can navigate a complex world with understanding and respect. My professional journey, deeply intertwined with my personal history, continues to evolve, reinforcing my commitment to a more inclusive and empathetic approach to history education.

In summary, my professional reflection reveals a journey marked by constant learning, adaptability, and a deep understanding of the role of personal and historical contexts in education. Exploring transactional and historical distance has enriched my teaching methods and reinforced my commitment to making history education more relevant and impactful for my students. This journey of self-discovery and professional development continues to shape my vision for the future of history education, emphasising the importance of bridging educational distances and fostering a deeper connection between the past and the present.

I find myself immersed in a profound sense of introspection. As an educator and a student of history, I have always grappled with the intersection of my personal identity and my

professional life. Growing up in a modest, middle-income household in Kraaifontein, South Africa, I have come to appreciate my roots, which were not always a source of pride. This appreciation was nurtured through storytelling and a deep awareness of the past, shaping my understanding of the world and my place in it.

The journey through my educational career, particularly in history education, has been enlightening – and I am still travelling. I have been heavily influenced by my primary school teachers, whose known and unknown impacts steered me towards a career in education. This influence is a testament to the power of educators – a power that often transcends the confines of a classroom.

As I delve deeper into my research, focusing on transactional and historical distances in history education, I have come to value the nuances of my identity more profoundly. Being White and Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa comes with its own set of challenges and stereotyping, especially in the realm of history education. I have learned the importance of embracing my background while being empathetic and respectful towards the culture of others. This delicate balance is crucial in fostering an inclusive and understanding society, particularly in a country still grappling with its past.

My research has also led me to critically evaluate traditional modes of learning, such as rote learning, and the importance of including various types of history in the curriculum. Teaching should not just be about distant historical events but should connect students to their immediate surroundings and histories. This approach fosters a deeper connection and understanding, making history more relatable and engaging.

On reflection, I see my role as a history educator as critical in bridging the gaps between past and present in our society. It is about not losing our identity but embracing it and, in turn, embracing others. This approach is vital for the future of history education, as it is not just about teaching facts but about nurturing understanding and empathy among future generations. My journey, intertwined with my identity and profession, continues to shape my vision for the future of history education, emphasising the transformative power of personal narratives in academic research and educators' vital role in shaping our society.

The division highlights how the research journey intertwined personal reflections with professional development, showcasing a comprehensive approach that balances personal narratives with academic rigour in history education.

Contributions of my Research

When research such as mine delves into the nuances of transactional and historical distance in history education through an autoethnographic methodology, the contributions of such research can be both broad and significant. I will now engage with this autoethnography's content, theoretical, and methodological contributions.

In my autoethnographic research, I delved into the complexities of history education within the context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, reflecting on my experiences across different roles to illuminate the profound impact of cultural and personal backgrounds on historical teaching and understanding. By doing an autoethnography study, the research offers a deepened understanding of the experience of history as a companion across different societal and political changes and educational reforms, granting an intimate look into an individual voyage, which might also resonate with others. This research approach provided a richer and more nuanced comprehension of how I connected with historical content and effectively bridged the gap between theoretical pedagogy and the realities of lived experience. Furthermore, it underscores the significant role of individual and cultural backgrounds in moulding educational experiences in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Recognising this importance can hopefully lead to more inclusive, diverse, and culturally accustomed learning and teaching methods in my research, hopefully speaking to others in similar post-conflict societies or those undergoing significant social transformations. Moreover, by delving into how my different educational experiences shaped my perceptions of history, the research has the potential to enhance historical empathy amongst other students and educators across various educational settings. With this understanding, educators in general, and history educators in particular, could be better positioned to cultivate an environment where students can deeply connect with and comprehend the lives of people from diverse temporal and

cultural backgrounds, thereby enriching their understanding of transactional and historical distance in a global context.

Growing up during the apartheid era, I observed the stark contrast between the formal, traditional history curriculum and the informal narratives that I encountered outside school, including the stories told by my father and in other informal settings. These experiences highlighted the tensions between official history and personal, lived experiences of the past. As a teacher and lecturer, I saw first-hand the enduring influence of apartheid on educational practices, even decades after its end. This historical inertia was evident in the continued use of rote learning and official narratives, resisting the shift towards more diverse and student-centred methodologies dealing with multiple perspectives.

Various influences shaped my journey in education – my father’s storytelling, an art teacher who taught history through artworks, and lecturers who challenged my understanding of teaching and history. This blend of influences drove me to advocate for a more holistic and inclusive approach to history education that integrated various types of history – oral, social, family, and local – to foster a sense of belonging and relevance for students.

The key contributions of this research are multifaceted and significant in advancing the understanding of history education. The study championed a holistic perspective on history education, moving beyond the conventional focus on dates and events to include the profoundly personal nature of teaching and learning history. This serves to recognise the various ways that individuals understand and internalise history, acknowledging the subjective nature of history education. This passage is intricately woven by a rich tapestry of experiences (informal and formal, unofficial and official types of history), cultural backgrounds, and present contexts, showcasing the multifaceted dimensions of how history is understood and internalised.

Crucial to the study was the emphasis on the importance of cultural and personal backgrounds in shaping educational experiences. This aspect was particularly vital in the context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, underscoring the need for history education to be inclusive, diverse, and culturally sensitive. The research also aimed to

enhance empathy for the past by delving into my educational journey and perceptions of history. This goal was to enable students to forge deeper connections with people from different times and cultural backgrounds, thereby enriching their understanding of history.

Moreover, the findings from this research are hopefully valuable for curriculum development. The findings underscore the importance of crafting content that considers students' personal and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that history lessons are relevant and resonate deeply with the students. Lastly, the research proposed a transformative approach to history education. It advocated aligning educational methodologies with students' real-life experiences and backgrounds, shifting from a one-dimensional portrayal of history to a more nuanced and empathetic understanding.

My research goes beyond theoretical insights into transactional and historical distances in history education; it offers practical applications for classroom strategies and teacher training programmes. By integrating the findings from my study, I can hopefully assist myself, educators, and other lecturers in crafting more effective teaching methodologies that recognise and bridge these distances, enhancing the engagement and understanding of history among Intermediate Phase students and history education students in South Africa.

In discussing my contributions to the theory through this autoethnographic research, I have delved into the complex relationship between transactional distance and historical distance, revealing how these concepts intertwine in the educational setting. Initially, I approached the theory of transactional distance quite simply, focusing on its main three factors: structure, dialogue, and student autonomy, especially in the context of the online learning of history. However, as my research progressed, I realised the broader intricacy of these concepts.

My journey into the theoretical aspects of this research was fascinating, at least to me. Transactional distance is a straightforward concept originally applicable to distance education. However, I recognised that historical distance holds as much significance as transactional distance, particularly when examining the structure and dialogue of autonomy in education. A failure to consider the historical context, both as a subject and as a past experience, could

hinder our ability to understand or reduce transactional distance in educational environments entirely.

What I found most intriguing was my novel application of my research to the theory of transactional distance. Traditionally, this theory focuses on distance education. However, I expanded its use by employing an autoethnographic approach, taking the theory of transactional distance from its usual online learning context and applying it to various educational settings, as explained in my cabinets of curiosities. This included informal settings, traditional face-to-face classroom experiences, and online environments, such as my time lecturing on the subjects of history and history education at TOGI.

My exploration revealed that transactional distance theory is, in my estimation, highly relevant, even in face-to-face settings. This was a surprising discovery as when I began my study, I had not anticipated the significant role that online learning would play, nor had I foreseen returning to a primarily face-to-face teaching environment. The factors initially identified in transactional distance theory and those that emerged later are applicable and crucial in understanding the dynamics of face-to-face educational settings.

My theoretical contributions to this research highlight the essential link between transactional and historical distances in education and how the former could be employed and applied to settings other than online learning settings. The theoretical contributions underscore the importance of aligning theoretical models with students' lived experiences and various forms of prior learning. It also sheds light on the evolving nature of digital education and the importance of understanding transactional distance within this context, aiming to bridge the gap between educators and students in both online and traditional learning environments.

As our world progressively shifts towards digital education, the importance of grasping the factors that shape transactional distance is heightened. The findings of this research can be instrumental in this arena, offering insights that can guide the evolution of online History and History Education courses. By applying these insights, educators can potentially reduce the perceived distance between the educator and student, creating platforms that deliver

content and foster heightened engagement. In conclusion, the contributions of this research can potentially reshape how we approach, teach, and understand history education.

The research also advances educational theory by exploring transactional and historical distances and considering practical applications. The harmony between theory and practice should ensure that history learning and teaching engagement resonate authentically with students' real-life experiences. As such, the research could hopefully provide some food for thought for history educators and other educators of all persuasions, curriculum designers, and policymakers, emphasising the need for theoretical models to be deeply aware of students' lived experience and earlier forms of learning.

In reflecting upon the methodological contributions of my autoethnographic research, I recognise the profound intertwining of methodology with theory and content contributions. This approach has allowed me to bring a deeply personal element back into research, which is particularly relevant given the focus of my study on educational distances.

The research stands as a testament to the value of autoethnography in educational research, illustrating its capacity to capture the depth and richness of individual learning experiences with specific reference to history education. This autoethnography approach promotes the broader adoption of autoethnography in academic inquiries. In my research it emphasises the possibility of contributing to the following: the nuanced exploration of personal and cultural narratives in history education, the integration of subjective experiences with historical facts to create a more comprehensive understanding, and the illumination of how individual perceptions of history are shaped by lived experiences, particularly in the context of a post-apartheid society. These contributions add depth to the academic study of history and offer a more empathetic and inclusive approach to understanding historical events and their impacts.

In my academic research, the frequent use of metaphors, such as cabinets of curiosities and a concertina, played a pivotal role in simplifying and elucidating complex concepts. My methodological contribution was using the cabinets of curiosities metaphor in autoethnographic research. This metaphor, used in fields other than education, proved

invaluable in exploring the multifaceted aspects of transactional and historical distances in education, especially in history education. It effectively represented the diverse collection of ideas and elements in my life, similar to historical collections of rare and eclectic items. This approach, unique in autoethnography, offered an innovative understanding of these educational concepts. Using this metaphor, my study was transformed into a curated knowledge space, effectively bridging the gap between complex theoretical ideas and accessible understanding.

Similarly, I employed the concertina metaphor to symbolise the varying distances that the various educators in my life played and that I, as an educator and lecturer, also played. Each educator played different musical notes that created various melodies, illustrating the dynamic interactions in history education dependent on the transactional and historical distance. Beyond aiding in comprehension, these metaphors served as tools for my personal reflection, enabling me to interpret and internalise complex subjects in a relatable and digestible manner. Doing so enhanced, in my estimation at least, my understanding and made my research more accessible and engaging to others. Additionally, the potential inclusion of songs as metaphors in my future research added an intriguing layer, suggesting a rich, multi-dimensional representation of academic concepts, especially those related to human experiences. Overall, my metaphorical approach in educational research was not merely stylistic but a powerful method for understanding, teaching, and communicating intricate ideas, adding accessibility and a personal touch to my work.

By placing myself in the research, I explored how my life experiences across different educational settings shaped my understanding of the distances therein. This introspective journey has provided valuable insights that would not have been possible without using autoethnography. The intensely personal nature of autoethnography enabled me to understand my current position and the various broader contexts in which I have found myself.

Moreover, using autoethnography as my methodology has highlighted the importance of recognising every educator and student's unique stories and backgrounds. Whether it be my father, other teachers, or lecturers, each individual operates within a broader context and

carries their own autoethnographic past. In working with students, I have become acutely aware of the need to be cognizant of the differences and uniqueness in everyone's stories and backgrounds, which are integral parts of their own cabinets of curiosities.

In summary, my research demonstrated the valuable role of autoethnography in educational research, especially in history education in South Africa. It underscores the importance of capturing the depth and richness of individual learning experiences through this method. This deepened understanding of personal experiences bridges the gap between theoretical pedagogy and lived experience, offering empirical validity and enriching academic discourse on history education.

Conclusion to Sitting Around the Kitchen Table

In the concluding chapter, *Sitting Around the Kitchen Table*, I delved with you, the reader as my companion, into the heart of history education as my companion, viewing it as a diverse tapestry woven with the threads of past events and personal narratives. This journey was far more than mere knowledge acquisition; it was about fostering a profound connection with history that resonates within us, shaping our identities as children, students, educators and lecturers. Around the metaphorical kitchen table, history transcends its traditional boundaries, evolving into a narrative deeply intertwined with our lives. It invites us to view the world through lenses of empathy and understanding, acknowledging that each story and memory enriches the grand narrative of humanity.

This PhD thesis has explored the intricate relationship between historical and transactional distances in history education, enriched by personal insights and narratives. In this space, we recognise the importance of blending macro and micro perspectives, interweaving historical events with unique personal experiences. This blend of perspectives, as evidenced through various personal accounts, emerges as a powerful tool to make history immediate, relatable, and impactful.

The autoethnographic approach I adopted revealed the profound impact of individual backgrounds, cultural contexts, and experiences on our/my engagement with history. The

kitchen table, serving as a symbol of familial gatherings and shared memories, aptly represents the convergence of personal stories with the broader historical canvas. It embodies the concept that history is not merely a collection of distant events but a mosaic of intertwined stories resonating on both personal and collective levels.

Figure 6.2

The mirror of time



Note: As I stand before this historical building again, separated by three decades from my first visit, I am reminded of the profound transformation in both my personal journey and the world around me. These photographs, taken 30 years apart at the same historical site, encapsulate the evolution of my relationship with history education, reflecting my personal growth and deepening historical thinking and understanding (Piet van As took the original photograph, and Marié Smith took the second photograph).

A pivotal aspect of this chapter is the re-evaluation of familiar historical landscapes through different perspectives. Around the kitchen table, the significance of viewing familiar landscapes with new or other eyes is emphasised, suggesting a re-evaluation and deeper understanding of known territories. It was Proust (1923, pp. 70-71) who wrote:

The only true voyage of discovery ... would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is.

In conclusion, as an autoethnography, this thesis sheds light on the pedagogical challenges and opportunities presented by transactional and historical distances in history education. It underscores the value of narrative techniques, interactivity, and student autonomy in bridging these distances. As we gather around our metaphorical kitchen tables, the stories shared, and the connections forged help to construct a rich tapestry of understanding. This approach can potentially transform history education into an experience that is not only immersive and engaging but also profoundly transformative, enriching both our present and our future and across transactional and historical distances.

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