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'I SAW ANGRY PEOPLE AND BROKEN STATUES': HISTORICAL EMPATHY IN SECONDARY HISTORY EDUCATION

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*ABSTRACT: Tasks which invite students to identify with historical actors and describe their perspectives are a common phenomenon in history education. The aim of this study is to explore the differences in students' answers when completing a writing task in first person ('imagine you are in the past') or in third person ('imagine someone in the past'), or a task in which such imagination is not explicitly asked. Furthermore we investigated the effects of the type of task on topic knowledge and situational interest. Students in Dutch secondary education (*N = *254) participated by completing a task on the Dutch Iconoclasm. Our analysis of student answers focused on aspects of historical empathy: historical contextualization, affective elements and perspective taking.*

Results were that all students gained some knowledge from the task, regardless of the type of task they completed. Students' situational interest also did not differ between the three tasks. However, students' written work showed that the first- and third-person writing tasks stimulated students to imagine concrete details of the past and emotions of historical actors. Students who were not explicitly asked to imagine themselves or someone in the past included more perspectives into their writings. Students who completed the task in first person tended to show more presentism and moral judgements of the past than students who completed a task in third person.

Keywords: historical empathy, historical imagination, task performance, secondary education, concrete elaboration

1. INTRODUCTION

'I saw angry people and broken statues' is a quote from an account that was the result of a writing task. The writer of the sentence, a 15-year-old student, was attempting to imagine the Protestant Iconoclasm in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century. He used his knowledge of the Iconoclasm to see in his mind's eye Protestants taking statues down by force, and he described the event as if he had been there himself.

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Tasks, which explicitly invite students to identify with historical actors and describe their perspectives, are a common phenomenon in many history textbooks, at least in the Netherlands. Such personal recount tasks are often considered to stimulate students' historical imagination and historical empathy by asking them to compose narratives about real people and situations, thus creating a more lively and understandable image of the past (Brooks, 2009; Cunningham, 2009). Narratives about and images of concrete historical actors help students understand historical developments and situations, which are often somewhat abstract (Lee, 1984; Prangsma *et al*., 2008). Both teachers and students assert that historical empathy facilitates their understanding of history and helps them remember important facts and concepts (De Leur *et al*., 2015). Finally, scholars in the field of history education consider the ability to exhibit historical empathy – or engage in historical perspective taking – an important component of historical thinking (e.g. Endacott and Brooks, 2013; Lee and Ashby, 2001; Seixas and Morton, 2012).

Although assumptions about the effects of tasks which ask the students to display historical empathy are abundant, research into the actual outcomes of these tasks is still scarce. We do not know (1) whether this type of task actually contributes to students' historical knowledge, (2) enhances students' interest in history and/or (3) helps them to construct concrete images of the past.

To explore the effects of a writing task which invites students to imagine a person in the past, we performed an experimental study. First, we discuss conceptualizations of historical empathy and writing tasks that can possibly evoke historical empathy.

2. Historical Empathy

Historical empathy is a much debated construct, although in the Netherlands controversies on empathy as an important part of historical thinking, such as occurred in Britain (Lee and Ashby, 2001), have been largely absent.

Historical empathy can be described as an activity in which students attempt to reconstruct, or form an image of, the decisions of an actor in the past, taking into consideration the context of the time in which the actor lived (Lee and Ashby, 2001). While some scholars argue that historical empathy may be impossible to achieve because human thinking is always inextricably linked to its own time and circumstances (VanSledright, 2001), others have tried to define the construct. For instance, Lévesque (2008) assumes that three factors play a role in historical empathy: imagination, contextualization and moral judgement. Barton and Levstik (2004) define historical empathy as appreciation for a sense of otherness of historical actors, shared normalcy of the past, recognizing effects of historical context and the multiplicity of historical perspectives, and understanding that our view on the past depends on our present context (pp. 210–221).

Endacott and Brooks (2013) proposed a model in which the different elements of historical empathy are interconnected. They approach historical empathy as a configuration of three main components that are performed or achieved by the students: historical contextualization, an affective connection and perspective taking. Since this model includes elements of historical empathy with which all other descriptions agree, in this paper, we will follow Endacott and Brooks's main components of historical empathy.

We will now discuss in more depth these components of historical empathy, and this will be followed by an introduction to historical imagination.

First, we need to acknowledge the importance of historical contextualization: constructing an historical context based on historical evidence. Imagining the world of an historical actor can be achieved only when information about the past is available (Collingwood, 1935; Lee, 1984; Lévesque, 2008). This historical context can be provided during the lesson, looked up or retrieved from memory. Endacott and Brooks (2013) contend that the type of contextualization needed for historical empathy includes 'deep understanding of the social, political and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are happening concurrently (p. 43)'. Berti *et al*. (2009) show that the more context knowledge students have, the better able they are to engage in historical empathy.

Still, using context knowledge is not self-evident. Students often lack enough overview knowledge to contextualize new information about the past (Van Boxtel and Van Drie, 2013). Moreover, when students enter the classroom, they already have images of the past based on prior knowledge and outside school experiences, literature, games or movies (Bronkhorst and Akkerman, 2016). Regardless of whether these images are correct, students may be tempted to use their already existing images when elaborating the accounts they produce, instead of studying the sources and information the teacher provides. This is, according to Kahneman (2011), an inevitable feature of the human mind, which is always keen to react to the first plausible thought instead of thinking things through. Teachers must work with these misunderstandings or biases (Seixas and Peck, 2004).

A second element of historical empathy is what Endacott and Brooks (2013) call the 'affective connection' in historical empathy. This consists of taking into account how affective reactions may have influenced the actions of an historical actor by connecting the experiences of the historical actor to those of the student. Reconstructing the emotions of people from the past can be a valuable part of historical empathy. However, there are serious pitfalls in interpreting the alleged emotions of historical actors (Boddington, 1980). Barton and Levstik (2004) even argue that treating people from the past as though they are identical to ourselves hinders historical understanding.

One problem with personal connections in historical empathy is recognizing both the 'sameness' and the 'otherness' of the past (Barton and Levstik, 2004). Although students can attempt to understand that people from the past also argued, fell in love, ate and slept, the meaning of these activities changes over time (Dressel, 1996). Recognizing 'otherness' is therefore a difficult undertaking. Furthermore, when relating the experiences of a past actor to students' own experiences, the students may be inclined to use their own morals and values to assess the past, without recognizing the differences between the past and the present. This can lead to unfounded (moral) judgements (Lévesque, 2008). Consequently, although it is impossible to engage in historical empathy without using your own feelings and experiences, thus projecting the present onto the past, reconstructing the thoughts and feelings of an historical actor is equally difficult. Not only is each individual unique but the 'mind-set' of each period is unique as well (Lévesque, 2008).

A third element of historical empathy is perspective taking. This involves gaining an understanding of how an historical actor might have thought about a situation and attempting to comprehend the actions and decisions of that historical actor by metaphorically looking through his eyes (Endacott and Brooks, 2013). Presenting history in the form of personal accounts is increasingly popular (Nilsen, 2016), and several scholars have investigated how students are able to adopt the perspective of an historical actor (Hartmann and Hasselhorn, 2008; Huijgen *et al*., 2014). However, in an 'empathy task', students put considerable effort into adopting the perspective of a single historical actor, whereas gaining an understanding of an historical event requires the exploration of multiple perspectives. This multiperspectivity is considered one of the key features of historical understanding (Seixas and Morton, 2012), but it is difficult to achieve (Grever and Van Boxtel, 2014).

We regard historical empathy as the sum of historical contextualization, an affective connection and historical perspective taking. Using these three elements of historical empathy, students construct images of the past. This reconstruction is important, as it creates a mental picture about real humans with real concerns, thus bringing the past world to life (Savenije, 2014) instead of remaining a narrative full of abstractions (Barton and Levstik, 2004). Lee (1984) even argues that historical imagination, based on evidence, is a criterion of historical understanding since the use of concrete details might be a sign that the writer constructed a concrete image of the past. This is consistent with the use of the construct of 'concrete elaboration' suggested by Beishuizen *et al*. (2003), who discuss the possible importance of concrete details in learning processes.

For the professional historian, historical imagination (in the sense of forming an image) is considered to be a necessary activity. Collingwood (1935) mentions that historians are like detectives: based on various indications, they build an imaginary picture. However, more than the professional historian, students have to fill in the gaps

in their knowledge using information-elements that seem reasonable from their own (present) point of view (Barton and Levstik, 2004; Kahneman, 2011; Virta and Kouki, 2014). Therefore, using imagination is believed to possibly lead students to 'presentism', the transfer of context from the present to the past (Brooks, 2009; Huijgen *et al.*, 2014; Wilschut, 2012), and hence teachers are cautious about engaging in tasks that stimulate students' imagination (Egan and Judson, 2008).

3. Types of Writing Tasks That can Evoke Historical Empathy

Students can show historical empathy in almost every type of task. When writing an essay, or discussing a question on an historical event, they can take thoughts and feelings of historical actors into consideration. In this study, we focus on writing tasks that explicitly ask students to reconstruct the perspective of a person by analysing, explaining or describing the historical context and the views, feelings, emotions and experiences of the actor, grounded in evidence (Harris and Foreman-Peck, 2004). Such writing tasks can be phrased in first-person singular ('imagine *you* are …') or third-person singular ('imagine *someone* who is …'). This distinction is important. Ruby and Decety (2004) showed that even neurologically a difference can be observed between a person who is thinking about himself or about another person. They argue that to be able to adopt the perspective of another person (third-person perspective), a person has to regulate his or her self-perspective (first person). In other words, a person has to put himself or herself aside to imagine the perspective of someone else. In this study, we label a task in which the student has to imagine him or herself in the past as 'First-Person Writing Task'. A task in which the student has to imagine what a person from the past would have seen we call 'Third-Person Writing Task'.

When asking students to write, it is useful to consider which genre to impose on them (Coffin, 2006), as the genre in which students have to write can guide what they do. An important genre in writing history is the 'recount' genre which has the purpose of 'telling what happened'. This genre is subdivided by Derewianka (2003) into the sub-types of (among others) 'personal recount' (telling what happened from a personal perspective) and 'factual recount' (telling what happened without such a perspective). For this study, we have split up the personal recount subtype into one which describes the past from a first-person perspective and one which takes a third-person perspective. By giving students a task asking for a personal recount (in first or third person), students are likely to write an account of what happened, presumably through the eyes of either themselves in the past or someone else in the past, depending on how the task is phrased. Causal reasoning or explanations and broader perspectives on long-term developments are not to be expected, as they do not fit the recount genre.

In the history classroom, writing tasks which aim to stimulate historical empathy can contribute to many different types of learning outcomes, for

example historical knowledge, interest and understanding of the 'otherness' of the past.

Cunningham (2009) found that teachers consider these tasks beneficial for students' interest. Situational interest is the form of interest that is triggered by the situation at hand; this is in contrast to individual interest, which is a personal disposition that is independent of the situation (Linnenbrink-Garcia *et al.*, 2010). Situational interest in the classroom can be developed when a student feels personally involved in an assignment or a specific subject because of its use of concrete details (Lee, 1984) or because the task looks like a real-world situation to which the student can relate (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007). Furthermore, in a previous study we found that some students (age 15) believe they will gain knowledge when working on a task inviting them to imagine themselves in the past: 'This way you summarize everything and you will remember things that happened' (De Leur *et al*., 2015). This assumption is consistent with the idea that the elaboration of information positively contributes to remembering. An important form of elaboration is to think of concrete examples in order to construct new knowledge (Beishuizen *et al*., 2003). Finally, personal recount tasks may direct students' attention to the idea that people in the past have been real human beings with their own ideas, values and considerations which need to be taken seriously instead of just considering them 'weird' or simply deficient compared to the present (e.g. Barton and Levstik, 2004).

In this study, we will look for the potential learning benefits of personal and factual recount tasks in relation to the type of task given to students, while taking into account potential pitfalls.

4. Research Question

The research questions that are addressed in this study are:

(1) What is the effect of the type of task (First-Person Writing Task, Third-Person Writing Task or Factual Recount) on students' historical knowledge?
(2) What is the effect of the type of task (First-Person Writing Task, Third-Person Writing Task or Factual Recount) on students' situational interest?
(3) What is the effect of the type of task (First-Person Writing Task, Third-Person Writing Task or Factual Recount) on students' use of the three different elements of historical empathy to create concrete images of the past?

5. METHOD

To answer the research questions, we performed an experimental study with a pre-test/post-test design.

Participants

The study was conducted in seven urban and suburban secondary schools in the western part of the Netherlands. Twelve classes participated, with 254 students in total. Of the students, 53% were male and 42% were female. All the students attended HAVO level 3 (higher general secondary education; these students were preparing for a university of applied sciences, in the ninth grade and aged 14–16). History is a compulsory subject for all these students. Schools offer 2 hours of history education per week. Different textbooks were used in different schools, but in all textbooks personal recount tasks were present. This study was conducted during regular classes. The first author was present in the lesson during which the pre-test and the task were completed. The post-test was supervised by the students' history teacher.

Task

All the students worked on a task about the Dutch Iconoclasm. In the sixteenth century, due to the Reformation, religious turmoil occurred in the geographic area now called the Netherlands and Belgium. Some Protestants decided to raid Catholic churches to make them available and suitable for Protestant services. This is called the Iconoclasm (1566). The Iconoclasm is present in all Dutch history textbooks, as it is one of the key events in the Dutch fight for independence from the Spanish king Philip II. All the students participating in this study had already learned about the Iconoclasm approximately a year before participating in this study. The content of Dutch history textbooks is largely similar when it comes to the Iconoclasm.

All the students were given the same picture of a church being raided, a map of where the Iconoclasm took place and three texts providing information about the people involved in the Iconoclasm and the role religion played in sixteenth-century society (700 words in total). Preceding these materials was a short introductory text to remind the students of the context of the Iconoclasm and to position the Iconoclasm in a broader historical context. In the task, the students were encouraged to use this provided information. The participants all had experience with tasks like this, that is, a writing task based on multiple sources.

While the provided materials on the Iconoclasm were the same for all students, the phrasing of their writing tasks differed. Within each class, the students were randomly assigned to one of the three following conditions.

(1) First-Person Writing Task (86 students), the task in which the student had to imagine him- or herself in the past. This task was phrased as follows: 'Imagine you live in 1566. Your parents strictly forbade you to watch the Iconoclasm, but you went anyway. Describe what you see around you, and what you think of it.'
(2) Third-Person Writing Task (84 students), in which the students had to look through the eyes of Jacob, a fictional sixteenth-century boy. We deliberately chose an adolescent rather than an adult to help the students to identify with the subject (Husbands and Pendry, 2000). This task was phrased as follows: 'Jacob is a 14-year-old boy. He lives in 1566. His parents strictly forbade him to watch the Iconoclasm, but he went anyway. Describe what Jacob sees around him and what he thinks of it.'
(3) Factual Recount task (84 students), the task in which no particular perspective was requested. This task was phrased: 'Describe what happened during the Iconoclasm.'

The students could spend up to 30 min studying the sources and composing an answer to their task, without having a minimum or maximum amount of words to be used. All students completed their task in 20–30 min.

Before conducting the study, we performed two pilots: one with four students, in order to decide upon the historical topic of the task, and one with 25 to test the final draft. Based on these pilots, we fine-tuned the task. We altered the instructions in order to clarify them for the students and placed a greater focus on the actual actions of the Iconoclasm instead of on the religious troubles.

Historical Knowledge Test

Immediately before engaging in the task and one week following the task we tested the knowledge of the students about the Iconoclasm. The test consisted of 11 short-answer questions regarding themes present in the provided information, such as the following: Where was the Iconoclasm? What were the differences between Catholics and Protestants? and Why was religion so important in the sixteenth century? We removed two items from the test. In the pre-test, none of the students could answer the question regarding when the Iconoclasm took place, and removing the question about the relation between saints and the Iconoclasm improved internal consistency. The maximum score for the test was 17. The pre- and post-test were the same. The Cronbach's alpha, an indicator for the internal consistency of the test for the remaining nine items was .71 for the pre-test and .68 for the post-test, which is considered acceptable to good (Cohen *et al*., 2007). We rated all the tests using an answer key, and then

randomly selected 30 tests from different conditions from both the pre- and post-test to determine interrater reliability. The Cohen's Kappa, determining interrater reliability was between .69 ('Why would a Protestant consider the Iconoclasm to be important?') and .93 ('Where did the Iconoclasm take place?'), which is considered substantial to almost perfect (two raters, one of whom the first author) (Landis and Koch, 1977).

Situational Interest Questionnaire

Immediately after completing the task, the students filled out a situational interest questionnaire (Linnenbrink-Garcia *et al*., 2010). This questionnaire measures the interest provoked by the task the students just completed. The questionnaire consists of 12 statements in which students were asked whether they considered the task enjoyable and engaging (e.g. 'the task we just completed was fascinating') and important and valuable (e.g. 'I think that what I learned working on this is useful'). The students had to rate their level of agreement with these statements on a six-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha was .94 (N = 223) which is considered very highly reliable (Cohen *et al*., 2007).

Analysis of Written Accounts

We analysed the written accounts the students produced to gain more insight into the students' approach to the task. We identified four categories related to historical contextualization: the use of information-elements from the sources, the use of additional (correct) historical information from prior knowledge, the use of elements that colour the narrative and bring it alive (concrete elaboration), and the use of information-elements that are historically incorrect. In relation to the affective connection, we distinguished display of emotional elements, inclusion of moral judgement and display of presentism. Finally, we identified the perspectives that were explained, in this case the Catholic and Protestant perspectives, which were both present in the provided information (see Table 1). For the first-person and third-person conditions, we also wanted to know if the students adopted the storyline we gave them in the task.

We randomly selected 30 written accounts from all three conditions to determine interrater reliability. The kappa was between .63 and 1 (two raters, i.e. the first and second authors). The lowest kappa was found for the category 'additional (correct) historical information from prior knowledge', and the highest was found for 'use of suggested storyline'.

TABLE 1. Coding scheme for the analysis of the written accounts

Category	Code	Example
–Use of given information	Use of information-elements from the given information 0: no elements 1: one or two elements 2: three or more elements	1: ‘’The statues were torn down and broken.’ 2: ‘Some people criticized the church. These people were called Protestants. Most of them were poor, whereas the church was rich. In the end, a rebellion occurred.’
–Additional (correct) information	Use of information-elements from students’ prior knowledge 0: no elements 1: one or more elements	1: ‘Luther wrote things on a piece of parchment.’
–Concrete elaboration	Addition of concrete details from imagination to enliven the narrative 0: no elements 1: one or more elements	1: ‘He hears people screaming, glass scattering and the sound of falling stones’
–Incorrect information	Use of incorrect information-elements 0: no incorrect elements 1: one or more incorrect elements	1: ‘Philip II came to the church and killed everyone.’
-Acknowledgement or display of emotions	Acknowledgement or display of the emotions of an historical actor 0: no emotions 1: emotion literally taken from the given information 2: emotions not taken from the given information (coming from the imagination of the student).	1: ‘The protestants were angry’2: ‘My energy to live was gone in an instant.’
–Moral judgement	Judgement of the Iconoclasm 0: no judgement 1: judgement, whether positive or negative	1: ‘I think the Protestants were right.’
–Display of presentism	Display of presentism 0: no presentism 1: display of hindsight or present values, clashing with historical context	1: ‘If all the angry men would sign a petition and present that list to the King, they would not need to destroy the church.’

(Continued)

TABLE 1. (Continued)

Category	Code	Example
- Explanation of perspectives	Presence of perspective taking (one side or both) 0: no perspectives explained 1: one perspective (Catholic or Protestant) taken and explained 2: Both perspectives taken and explained	1: 'The Protestants were angry because they were not allowed a church of their own.' 2: 'They didn't think it fair that the Catholic church was so rich, and Philip thought the Protestants didn't have the right to exist because they were not obedient to the church.'
- Use of suggested storyline	Presence of elements from the given storyline* 0: no use of the given storyline 1: use of the given storyline	1: 'He thought his parents had been right in forbidding him to go and look.'

*Due to the nature of the task, the 'use of given storyline' was only scored for the First-Person Writing Task condition and Third-Person Writing Task condition. The Factual Recount task condition was not given a storyline to work with.

6. HYPOTHESES

With respect to historical knowledge, we expected no differences between the First-Person, Third-Person or Factual Recount condition. The three tasks all require processing of the provided information, although for slightly different purposes (to imagine what you/a person sees and thinks or to summarize information from sources).

Regarding interest, we expect that the students completing a First- or Third-Person task will report higher situational interest than the students working on the Factual Recount task. This is consistent with the idea that personal recount tasks stimulate personal connections (which can make historical content more meaningful).

With respect to the different elements of historical empathy, we expect the students completing the First- or Third-Person task to display more information from prior knowledge, narrative elaboration and more emotional elements in their written accounts than the students working on the Factual Recount task. This is because tasks which encourage students to write about a person instead of an event stimulate the students to fill the gaps in their knowledge elements from their imagination. In addition, we expect the students in the First-Person or Third-Person condition to make more historical mistakes (because they will make greater use of their imagination) than the students working on the

Factual Recount task. Finally, when the students are asked to transport themselves to the past ('First-Person') we expect them to display more presentism and moral judgement than when they are asked to imagine a person from the past without becoming that person themselves ('Third-Person') because they are more likely to include their own experiences in their answers.

7. RESULTS

Of the 254 participants, 13 students (3 in the First-Person, 5 in the Third-Person and 5 in the Factual Recount condition) did not produce a written account or wrote a text of less than 10 words. We excluded these students from our sample. We also excluded 10 students from the Third-Person condition who wrote their text completely in the first person, although third person was requested. We included the remaining 231 students in our analysis of the written accounts. Of these students, 15 were not present at the post-test (8 from the First-Person, 3 from the Third-Person and 4 from the Factual Recount condition) and were thus excluded from our analysis of the students' learning outcomes.

TABLE 2. Mean scores and standard deviations on the pre- and post-knowledge tests in the three conditions

	First-Person Writing Task (N = 75)		Third-Person Writing Task (N = 66)		Factual Recount Task (N = 75)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Pre-test	4.10	2.55	4.96	2.99	3.98	2.70
Post-test	4.82	2.55	5.64	2.69	5.00	2.66

TABLE 3. Mean scores and standard deviations on the situational interest questionnaire in the three conditions

	First-Person Writing Task (N = 80)		Third-Person Writing Task (N = 68)		Factual Recount Task (N = 75)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Situational interest*	3.09	1.09	3.07	1.02	2.92	.97

*On a six-point Likert scale.

Historical Knowledge

Table 2 shows the mean scores on the pre- and post-test for each condition. There were no significant differences between the conditions on the pre-test ($F(2,213) = 2.59$, $p = .08$) or on the post-test ($F(2,213) = 1.84$, $p = .16$). In all three conditions, the students scored significantly higher on the post-test than on the pre-test. It must be noted that the students scored relatively low on the historical knowledge test: the maximum score was 17.

Situational Interest

Table 3 shows the mean scores on the situational interest questionnaire for each condition. We did not find a significant effect of the type of task (First-Person, Third-Person, Factual Recount task) on the students' situational interest ($F(2,220) = .62$, $p = .54$).

Written Accounts

The word length of the written accounts varied between 10 words and 193 words, with a mean length of 62.56 (SD = 30.00). No significant differences in word length between the conditions were found ($F(2, 228) = .21$, $p = .81$). For three examples of the written accounts, see Appendix.

Table 4 shows the results of the written accounts analysis. Because we used nominal and ordinal variables, we conducted Pearson chi-square tests.

We will first discuss the results regarding historical contextualisation, that is, the use of information elements. Nearly all the students included information from the sources in their written accounts. The differences in the use of provided information were significant. The students in the Factual recount condition included far more information from the sources than the students in the First-Person and Third-Person conditions. In all three conditions, the students used about the same amount of information-elements from prior knowledge (e.g. a remark about Luther's theses). When looking at the use of narrative elaboration, the differences between the conditions were significant. Whereas the students in the Factual Recount condition rarely used concrete details to colour their written accounts, the majority of the students in the First-Person and Third-Person conditions wrote one or more statements such as *'I would feel the heat of the burning churches*'(student 82) or *'People were yelling'* (student 103). Some of the students described entire fictional scenes: '*The mayor tries to stop them but his skull is being broken by a statue of the Holy Francis*' (student 163). Regarding the use of incorrect information-elements, Table 4 shows that only a small number of written accounts contained historically incorrect statements. The

TABLE 4. Results of the written accounts analysis and of a Pearson chi-square test ($N = 231$)

	First-Person Writing Task	Third-Person Writing Task	Factual Recount Task		
	$N = 83$	$N = 69$	$N = 79$	χ^2	p
Use of given information				31.26	.00**
- *No*	6	8	0		
- *1 or 2 elements*	42	36	19		
-*3 or more elements*	35	25	60		
Use of additional information from prior knowledge				46.99	.00**
- *No*	66	55	65	0.24	.89
-*1 or more elements*	17	14	14		
Use of additional information: narrative elaboration				59.15	.00**
- No	31	23	70		
-1 or more elements	52	46	9		
Incorrect statements				7.51	.02*
- *No incorrect statements*	66	42	50		
- *Incorrect statement(s)*	17	27	29		
Emotional elements				17.60	.00**
- *No emotional elements*	33	24	49		
- *Emotional elements from sources*	29	28	25		
- *Other emotional elements*	21	17	5		
Moral judgements				6.69	.04*
- *No*	43	48	54		
- *Positive or negative*	40	21	25		
Display of presentism				7.86	.02*
- *No*	59	56	70		
- *Hindsight or present values*	24	13	9		
Explanation of perspective(s)				47.00	.00**
- *No*	56	46	23		
- *Catholic or Protestant*	22	19	34		
- *Catholic and Protestant*	3	1	22		
Use of given storyline				6.37	.01*
- *Not used*	66	42			
- *Used*	17	27			

** < .01; * < .05.

use of incorrect elements significantly differed by condition. Incorrect statements appeared more often in the Third-Person and the Factual Recount conditions than in the First-Person condition. Some of the students made very specific mistakes, such as '*Luther and Calvin thought the people should believe less in God'* (student 7), but most of the mistakes consisted of statements that involved more violence than is historically correct: *'The protestants were murdered in the churches'* (student 139).

We will now proceed to results regarding the affective connection: emotions, judgements and presentism. The display of emotions differed significantly by condition. Many of the students included emotional elements in their written accounts. These were phrased in everyday feelings but mostly connected to the historical context. The students in the First-Person and Third-Person conditions used more emotional elements that were not part of the provided sources than students in the Factual Recount condition. Many of the students mentioned the angry Protestants, as they were mentioned in the given information, but some students, particularly in the First- and Third-Person conditions, tried to imagine beyond that, connecting descriptions of emotions to the historical context: *'I see a little child crying. It must have been scared by the noise and the aggression'* (student 141). The occurrence of moral judgements also significantly differed by condition. The students in the First-Person condition displayed moral judgements more often than the students in the Third-Person and Factual Recount conditions. The judgements that were expressed the most rejected the Iconoclasm: *'He will grow up with the idea the Protestants are wrong'* (student 136) or *'I think it's a pity'* (student 3).

Most of the accounts did not include statements that could be regarded as presentism. However, the display of presentism significantly differed by condition. The students in the First-Person condition displayed the most presentism (n = 24), whereas these displays were much less prevalent in the Third-Person condition (n = 14) and were found the least often in the Factual Recount condition (n = 9). One example of a display of presentism is *'When I go raiding a shop, I will be arrested'* (student 142), as is the students' use of present day values such as *'People should respect one another'* (student 80).

Regarding the element of perspective taking, Table 4 shows major differences in the extent to which the students clarified why Protestant or Catholic people did or thought certain things. Whereas almost a third of the students in the Factual Recount condition explained both the Protestant and the Catholic perspectives, very few students in the First- or Third-Person conditions did so. Between the First-Person and Third-Person condition, there were almost no differences: the perspectives were phrased primarily with words such as 'thus'

or 'because of'. An example is as follows: *'The Protestants were angry because they weren't allowed to build a church of their own'* (student 14).

Finally, the students in the Third-Person condition used the suggested storyline about the boy Jacob and his parents significantly more (n = 27) than the students in the First-Person condition (n = 17), which resulted in phrases such as *'He should have listened to his parents'* (student 215).

8. Discussion

When examining the post-test results and comparing them to the pre-test, all the students demonstrated an increased amount of knowledge in the post-test; however, in line with our hypothesis, we did not find significant differences on the post-test between the three conditions. All three tasks asked the students to process the information from the sources through writing, and it appears that this processing is done to the same extent in the three different conditions, which may explain the comparable scores on the post-test. Still, the scores on the knowledge tests were very poor in all the conditions. This may be due to the fact that the students did not receive credit for this test, as they are used to, and they did not prepare for it in advance. Additionally, the students could complete the task without processing (all of) the given information.

We expected the First and Third-Person tasks to provoke more situational interest than the Factual Recount Task. However, the results of the situational interest questionnaire did not confirm this hypothesis, since the scores on that questionnaire were similar for all three conditions. It is possible that the participating students perceived working with sources and writing accounts as one type of learning experience, regardless of the exact content of the task. To them, First- and Third-Person tasks may look just like any another reading-and-writing assignment, and we know reading sources and producing written products can be an obstacle for students who struggle with language (Monte-Sano and De La Paz, 2012).

All the students were given the same information to work with during their tasks. The students in the Factual Recount task condition reproduced much of this information in their written accounts, more so than the students in the First- and Third-Person conditions. This is consistent with the findings of Brooks (2008), who concluded that students who are asked to write a factual recount are more inclined to collect factually accurate information from sources. In all three conditions, the students added some additional historical information based on prior knowledge. However, the students in the First- and Third-Person conditions enlivened their written accounts with much more narrative elaboration than the students who worked on the Factual Recount task. Perhaps the students

in the First- and Third-Person conditions felt freer to use everything they imagined than did the Factual Recount task students, who attempted to provide a correct and complete account of the events based on the facts they knew.

It is noteworthy that students from all the conditions made mistakes (i.e. displayed incorrect information-elements), although the majority of the students wrote an account without incorrect elements. The students in the First-Person condition produced fewer mistakes than the students in the other two conditions. It is unclear why students in the Third-Person condition made more mistakes than those in the First-Person condition. In the Factual Recount condition, the students used more information from the sources, which might explain why they made more mistakes, possibly as a result of misreading these sources.

The students who were assigned to the First- and Third-Person tasks displayed more emotions in their written accounts than the Factual Recount task students. This is hardly surprising; as students performed the First- and Third-Person tasks with a focus on a personal perspective, one may assume that they performed this task with a focus on their personal perspective. The Factual Recount task students were not explicitly asked to describe the thoughts and feelings of a person, so they did not do that. It is assumed that students attempting to imagine the emotions of a person living in the past will make mistakes as a result of fantasizing too much. However, we did not find many mistakes. This suggests that imagining emotions does not necessarily have to lead to excessive fantasy.

Of all the students, those in the First-Person condition displayed the most moral judgements. They wrote predominately about their disapproval of the Iconoclasm. It is possible that these students, who were asked to imagine themselves in the past, felt more encouraged to write about their own thoughts regarding the Iconoclasm than the students in the Third-Person condition or the students in the Factual Recount condition. The students in the First-Person condition showed the most 'presentism'. It seems that because these students were asked to place *themselves* in the past, it was more difficult for them to put aside their twenty-first-century ideas and experiences. Still, the small amount of presentism the students displayed was found mainly in the choice of words, such as 'having respect for the other religion.'

Regarding the use of multiple perspectives, we can say that the Factual Recount task students describe more often Catholic as well as Protestant perspectives, thus acknowledging both sides of the conflict, than the First- and Third-Person condition students. Adopting a perspective in the First- and Third-Person tasks seemed to work only in relation to the single perspective requested in the task. In terms of perspectives, we must briefly consider the students in the Third-Person condition who produced an account written in first person. Perhaps these students misread their task, but it may also be the case that they are used to personal recount tasks in which

they have to adopt a first-person perspective. This could suggest that, whereas a First-Person task results in accounts written in first person, a Third-Person task may also lead (some) students to write in first person.

The majority of the students did not use our storyline about a child whose parents forbade him to watch the Iconoclasm. Still, the Third-Person students followed it more often than the First-Person students. Perhaps the use of 'I' in writing hindered the adoption of a given storyline and instead stimulated these students to create their own stories.

All research has its limitations, and this study is no exception. We first have to consider the characteristics of the participants' age group. Vygotsky (2004) suggests that imagination 'matures' with age, since experiences feed imagination. During adolescence, students still are maturing by acquiring experiences. Since we chose 14–16-year-old students for this study, we cannot generalize to all secondary school students. It may be possible that younger students would produce written accounts less rich in historical images, while older students would be more able to imagine because they can relate to more extensive experiences. Furthermore, students of other age groups may have different abilities regarding the use of information from multiple sources. Further research could help in understanding performance by students of different age groups on a task which asks students to imagine a person in the past.

Secondly, the task was a writing task. This form can be difficult for students and may thus have clouded the results, particularly regarding situational interest. We did not consider in advance the students' writing proficiency or their ability to write in a certain genre (i.e. personal recount vs. factual recount). Additional research on historical imagination and historical empathy should shed light on the question of whether a writing task elicits different types of learning and appreciation than drawing or role play, for instance.

Finally, in this study, we tested the students in their own classrooms and during history lessons, but the task was not a part of a complete lesson unit that was taught at that point in time. Therefore, we did not include the role of the teachers in this research, although as with all education, the teachers define the purposes of learning (Harris and Foreman-Peck, 2004). We did not explore the place of the task in the curriculum, the assessment of the achieved level of historical empathy, or the amount and form of feedback a student would receive on his or her written account. It would be particularly useful to focus further research on how teachers introduce and assess a personal recount task and how they give feedback on such a task.

9. Conclusion

In this study, we investigated the effects of the type of task on students' (1) historical knowledge, (2) situational interest and (3) use of different elements of

historical empathy to create concrete images of the past. We compared two tasks explicitly asking students to imagine a person in the past (First-Person and Third-Person) with a Factual Recount task.

In terms of historical knowledge and situational interest, we found no significant differences between the First- and Third-Person tasks and the Factual Recount task. In terms of concrete images, as we expected, the written accounts in the First- and Third-Person conditions displayed more additional information, far more narrative elaboration and more emotional elements than the accounts in the Factual Recount condition. The students in the Factual Recount condition reproduced more of the given information and explained more perspectives than the students in the First- and Third-Person conditions. The accounts written in the first person contained the fewest historical mistakes.

Three differences were found between the First- and Third-Person Tasks. The First-Person task elicited more presentism and moral judgements, and the Third-Person task stimulated more use of the given storyline among the students.

What are the implications for educational practice? Although teachers may use a task that can evoke historical empathy to arouse situational interest, based on this research, it is not necessarily the case that such tasks trigger more interest than other – more regular – tasks. Additionally, although the acquisition of historical knowledge is not often mentioned as a central aim of First- or Third-Person Writing tasks, the results of this research suggest that students acquire at least no less knowledge than is acquired in a Factual Recount task.

If teachers would like to stimulate students to form concrete images of the past, a First- or Third-Person Writing Task seems to be a useful instrument. These tasks, more than a Factual Recount task, dare students to use their imagination to enliven the narrative they produce and to connect to an historical actor. The results of this study suggest that teachers do not have to fear too greatly that their students will make mistakes as a result of fantasizing. However, particularly when choosing a First-Person task, it seems wise to address the possible pitfalls of presentism and moral judgement before or after to make the students aware that their frame of mind is not necessarily the same as that of people in the past. When teachers want students to follow a given storyline, a Third-Person task seems more useful. Finally, if a teacher would like students to recognize multiple perspectives or to reproduce given information, a Factual Recount task seems to apply more than a First- or Third-Person Writing task.

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Appendix

Examples of students' written accounts.

First-Person Writing Task (student 163)

Flying statues.

Revolt in the streets. Hundreds of people run towards the Church of Our Lady. Although mother said to me I was not allowed to go, I sneaked out of the house. Once there, I see ladders, ropes and stones everywhere. The mayor tries to stop them, but his skull is crashed with a statue of the Holy Francis. When they have ruined all statues, they go home. I climb on the roof and into my room and I am going to pray for forgiveness.

Third-Person Writing Task (student 193)

The Iconoclasm through the eyes of a child.

'I will go and look at the Iconoclasm anyway!' Jacob walks around the corner and sees an enormous chaos: rich and poor people beating the statues, debris. In the church there is ravage. Jacob takes a piece of stone and sees it once must have been a face, but all he can see now is a nose and an eye. He throws the stone away. He thinks: 'gosh, what could have happened that these people destroy the statues?'

Factual Recount Task (student 246)

The Iconoclasm.

This event is about the Christian faith, which has split up. The Catholics and the Protestants. The Protestants also were Christians but they thought that you should be able to pray directly to God and not through the saints, as the Catholics did. In addition, there were people who were dissatisfied with their poor living conditions and people who were just curious. All these people came together to raid and plunder the catholic churches.

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