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***How do students, teachers and education professionals experience visual sources in the teaching and learning of History?***

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September, 2017

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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## Terminology

**A-level** Advanced level (2 year pre-university course for 16-18 year-olds)

**AQA** Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

**BERA** British Educational Research Association

**COP** An acronym for 'Content, Origin, Purpose'

**CPD** Continuing Professional Development

**GCSE** General Certificate in Secondary Education

**IHR** Institute of Historical Research, University of London

**ITE** Initial Teacher Education

**Key Stage 3 (KS3)** In England, this refers to schooling between the ages of 11-14

**Key Stage 4 (KS4)** In England, this refers to schooling between the ages of 15-16

**loc.** Abbreviation for 'location,' refers to places location lines of texts referenced on Kindle

**NQT** Newly Qualified Teacher

**OCR** Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations. This was the exam board being followed by GCSE and A-level History students in the school where research was conducted.

**OFSTED** The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

**PGCE** Postgraduate Certificate in Education

**Secondary school** In England this refers to schools for 11-16, and sometimes also 11-18 year-old students

**SEND** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

**VHS** A shorthand used for 'visual historical sources'

## **Abstract**

The idea that the emerging global society is also the age of the “pictorial turn” (Jenks, 1998; Mitchell, 2005; Mirzoeff, 2015) is one in which the use of visual historical sources in the teaching and learning of History in English secondary schools is situated. Yet there has been little research conducted into the ways such sources are experienced by teachers and students in the classroom, and the ways these are mediated by political, cultural and social forces. Despite this dearth of research, the need for further investigation is highlighted by a number of theorists who believe how working with visual images has the potential to develop visual ways of thinking both historically and about the world that are complicated (Schama, 2015), requiring what some see as quite specific “thinking dispositions” (Perkins, 1994).

This investigation explores the ways in which visual historical sources are experienced by teachers, students and education professionals. Three lessons in an English comprehensive school using visual sources were observed, pre and post-lesson interviews were conducted with teachers, as well as three student focus groups to add a student description of their experience with visual sources. A perspective external to schools is added through interviews with three professional educators working with visual sources with students in gallery and museum spaces as opposed to school spaces. This study identifies, analyses and compares different experiences of visual historical sources, and considers the implications these have for teacher pedagogy. As such, the key research question in this investigation is “How do students, teachers and education professionals experience visual sources in the teaching and learning of history?”

This qualitative study draws upon a form of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008, 2011, 2014) that moves from the positivist idea of data being ‘discovered’ to one which acknowledges that as researchers we are part of the world we study, and where data collection is seen as not being a neutral process. As such, it seeks to understand the constructs teachers, students, and education professionals use to understand their experiences with visual sources (Gibson & Hartman, 2014). In analysing the data through thematic analysis, a variety of theoretical positions are used to help conceptualise the perceptions described and observed in the research. From notions

of “thinking conjuncturally,” (Massey, 2005) to the hybridity of visual sources (Hall, 1990) and of the idea visual sources as “regimes of truth,” (Foucault, 1972), this study draws on theoretical positions from a variety of disciplines to understand the ways experiences with visual historical sources operate.

The findings illustrate how descriptions that emerge around the use of visual sources coalesce around seven main themes; access and engagement, acts of seeing, how images work, truth-claims, historical interpretation, intertextuality and pedagogical praxis. Within these, a number of axes can be used to describe positions that may at times seem paradoxical, such as descriptions of visual sources as being both transparent and opaque. In considering the implications of the use of visual historical sources for teacher pedagogy, it is claimed that they have the capacity to be rich interpretive tools for the construction of History, and can be seen as distinct spatial puzzles and representations that need to be understood as working in the specific context of their medium.



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 So what does talking about research into VHS look like? An illustration

During the pilot study for this research I observed a Year 10 (14-15 years-old) GCSE History lesson being taught by a colleague as part of the course 'South Africa, 1948-94.' As students studied a cartoon that was being used to convey the concept of Bantustans, I went round the room, asking students to tell me what they could see in the image (see Figure 1.1 and Appendix 8.1.2). Most started by describing the globe-headed man. Early on, one girl told me

The globe represents equality... that they all live on the same planet... We all live on the same planet, and you can go everywhere – you shouldn't be restricted.



Figure 1.1: Cartoon portraying policy of Bantustans in South Africa by J. H. Jackson, 1959, in Appendix 8.2

Here was a double puzzle: not only had this student interpreted the image in a way the cartoonist probably had not intended, but I was struggling to account for why this might be. Although there were interpretive differences amongst the students that were evident, none had read it quite like this. Some students used more literal metaphors, asserting that the man “is the world” whilst others used more tentative similes, such as “it’s like the world.” Two students identified the symbol as a “world leader,” and another, that “this suggests he rules the world.” Howells (2007: 118)

suggests this seemed to show how hermeneutics is “riddled with ambiguity ... how a text [or visual symbol] is able to mean several things at once,” revealing the tension between the signifier and the signified that semiotic theorists have identified (de Saussure, 2013). Yet this seemed at odds with the fact that whilst ambiguity may exist, the author intended a meaning that students from a different time and context were unable to grasp. This sense of the ambiguity of iconographical interpretation was one of a number of intriguing problems with VHS that my pilot study revealed, leaving me with a number of questions, such as how both the more blatant and more subtle nuances of interpretation of visual sources could be described and accounted for, and what the implications of this difference for student learning and teacher pedagogy in the teaching of History might be.

The following investigation aims to delve further into such issues around the way VHS are experienced, and what the implications of this might be, both in theoretical and practical terms. Further, it attempts to wrestle with the issue that teaching History using VHS poses a number of apparent paradoxes. Why, for instance, when some claim they are powerful learning tools in their own right do they seem all too often to be used as illustrative adjuncts to written text? And how can we account for the discrepancy between the aesthetic immediacy of visual sources that invite surface glances, and deeper, more complex readings, with their attendant pedagogical implications for the teaching of History? This research has sought to explore such questions through a series of semi-structured interviews, lesson observations and focus groups, which have involved students, teachers and education professionals who work with students in art galleries.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Underpinning this investigation is Shemilt’s (1984: 1) metaphor, borrowed from Tolstoy, of ‘the devil’s locomotive,’ where

listening to a history lesson in ignorance of the logic, perspectives and methods of the subject is akin to watching a locomotive without an understanding of physics,

factories, and economics. The action can be followed but its significance will prove elusive.

To extend the metaphor, this study sees VHS as a particular component of the 'locomotive' requiring analysis. Whilst the metaphor hints at a conflation of the positivism of scientific approaches with those of the social sciences, a realm Bhaskar (1979: 1) and others identify issues with, it is rather intended in the spirit of attempting to create new knowledge of this component, in relation to the other components that constitute the 'locomotive'.

Despite the ubiquity of modern iconography (Mirzoeff, 2015), there is a dearth of rigorous research into how VHS is used in educational settings, specifically in my professional case in the teaching and learning of History. Jaffee's (2006) and Card's (2008) work are examples of two notable voices in the educational field, yet whilst both contribute to theorising about VHS, neither claim to have conducted rigorous empirical supporting research.

Jaffee's (2006: 1373) action research study starts with the premise that most students often offer simplistic, "incomplete readings" of images in the study of History. As a consequence, "students needed more scaffolding so they could learn to move between historical, literary, and visual materials," which he proceeds to provide with apparently successful results. Further, Card's (2008: 38) notion that students "need to be trained to observe ... to linger over details and to reflect on what they see", as well as her concept of "seeing double", of how the meaning of visual coding can shift and slide over time has been developed in a number of her articles (2004, 2008 & 2011). Her notion of "seeing double" aligns Card's thinking with Seixas's (2000: 20) notion of how students "relate the versions of the past to their political uses in the present." How classroom and gallery practice do this is one aspect of working with VHS that will be explored.

The research that follows is an investigation of current practice in the use of VHS, and an attempt to identify implications that may be drawn from it. The starting point is the

premise that far from being merely illustrative adjuncts to text, pictures “are complicated,” and “need unpicking and unpacking” (Schama, 2015). Whilst the use of VHS is complex and problematic, Schama’s observation can be extended by suggesting that there is a paradox between the aesthetic immediacy of visual sources that invite a surface glance, and the deeper and more complex readings that are possible. Further, working with visual images is potentially effective not just for developing historical knowledge and understanding, but as a framework for cultivating what Perkins (1994: 90) alludes to as “thinking dispositions,” where art must be “thought through.” Within this, the diversity of contexts within which both students, teachers and professional educators work needs accounting for; an important part of this being the pedagogical traditions within which their values and practices emerge.

This study explores the way in which VHS operate within the discipline of History, laden as it is with value systems that are politically infused. To this end, this investigation sees History as doing specific things as a subject that directly inform the way VHS are understood and used in the classroom. Whilst an extensive examination of the nature of History is beyond the scope of this study, four key properties are seen to underpin an understanding of History as being fluid, political, relational and contingent.

Firstly, History is seen as fluid, as “a shifting, problematic discourse” (Jenkins, 2003: 31) in the sense that, as Foster et al (2016: 101-2) state, “historical knowledge is rarely fixed and inert. Rather, it is often socially constructed, context-dependent and complex,” and where, as Foucault (1972: 5) asserts, historical descriptions “never cease, in turn, to break from themselves” in the context of how they constantly transform from the present state of knowledge. Whilst ‘History’, ‘historical knowledge’ and ‘historical descriptions’ have different emphases, the idea of the plasticity of how History is understood is emphasised, which has implications for classroom pedagogy. Secondly, as Seixas (2000: 29) writes, all historical accounts are “fundamentally positioned and politicised,” which, as will be discussed further, is especially so in the field of History education. Thirdly, as White (1996: 1) believes, History is “more and more about relationships,” as opposed to things, ideas, or individual people. This is an

aspect that seems particularly heightened when working with VHS where such relationships take on a spatial aspect, emphasising the connections and disconnections between different visual representations of things. Finally, History is seen as contingent, an “unexpected combination of quite particular circumstances” which White (2011: 516) describes as “the mark of history as a discipline,” which in turn favours messiness and complexity over tidy, reductionist narratives. Bhabha (2004: 188), in writing on the location of culture, usefully conceptualises a “cross-hatched matrix of contingency... a spatial difference and temporal distance” which helps in understanding the trajectories along which contingent events occur, but which also needs to also be considered in a relational aspect to other events. Within this four-part conception it needs to be remembered that History as a discipline is different to History in the classroom, where the latter has a curriculum, a teacher, pupils, and often a resource, and where there can be significant disparity between some schools which may use textbooks and ‘teach to the test,’ and others which may have more latitude to explore ideas with teaching.

These four strands come together to take a particular position in relation to recent and historical debates around the role of History in the school curriculum, a discipline which has recently been witness to “an intensifying polarisation” (Haydn, 2012: 7) between history educators and policymakers. On the one hand, academic historians such as Skidelsky have promoted a “traditional” approach in schools that is “focused on the recall of historical facts” (Sheldon, 2011: 12), a stance recently echoed by Fordham’s (2016: 2) call for “a traditional educational stance” which, amongst other things, is “teacher-led... (and) places a strong emphasis on the authority of the teacher” as well as “on the transmission of culture from one generation to the next.” Whilst British historians such as Ferguson and Starkey have also recently supported proposed Conservative curriculum reforms for History, others such as Evans claim such proposals would put “pressure on teachers to rely on rote learning without understanding” (The Independent, 2013). Within this broad debate I place my own practice, and to an extent that of the school where this research was conducted, in a more progressive, student-centred, social constructivist tradition. It is one where, as Tosh (2008: ix-x) has argued, “the real value of history lies in equipping young people

with a distinctive mode of thinking which can be applied critically to the present,” and where, in its’ inherent messiness, “the proposition that a study of the past can provide straightforward ‘lessons’ for the present is problematic” (Foster et al, 2016: 220). Within this debate, however, it is acknowledged that terms such as ‘progressive’ and ‘traditional’ are highly contested and should not be seen as fixed, homogenised practices; instead, they exist in a fluid relationship with each other as they respond to internal and external factors.

Within this political landscape there also appears to be a growing dichotomy between the value many academic historians increasingly place on the use of VHS, and curriculum developments that seem to flow in contradictory directions. Cambridge Historian Gatrell (2016), for instance, is not atypical in describing how he has “slowly weaned himself to the business of looking at pictures as historical evidence”; yet at odds with this, the recently revised GCSE and A-level syllabuses have at times marginalised the use of VHS. How teachers position themselves and their practice with visual sources within such a contested terrain, therefore, is part of this investigation.

Much has been written acknowledging the prevalence of the visual in modern culture, yet this can tend to disguise issues that undercut such a seemingly all-pervading trend. When Jenks refers to the “ocularcentrism of modernity,” (1998: 3) which Alizzi (2016) sees as being magnified into a “cacophony of imagery,” it might be easy to see the rise of visual media as an all-pervading, homogeneous contemporary experience. Mitchell’s (2005: 5) thesis of the “‘pictorial turn’ ... the widely shared notion that visual images have replaced words as the dominant mode of expression in our time,” emerging from the digital revolution, would seem to add weight to this view. Yet this would belie not just the notion that people have differentiated experiences of the visual, but that the visual is not phenomenon associated only with the current time. When Ferguson (2003: loc.4185), for instance, describes the “ubiquitous” nature of the “iconography of Empire,” he is referring to a specific aspect of British nineteenth century culture that historically utilised the power of the visual.

Yet if we accept, with such caveats, that to an extent the emerging global society is a visual one (Mirzoeff, 2015: 6) that is “central to every activity” (Burnett, 2005: x), then this has a direct relevance for the classroom and the teaching of History. Cannadine (2011: 210), in this context, has identified a fundamental change in the way History is taught, away from the written word and towards visual images, which he sees as now being available in almost limitless supply. His observation can be taken further, though: there is a tension between technology enabling access for teachers to historical images, set against an English National Curriculum and GCSE and A-level syllabuses that retain a largely, with a few notable exceptions, dominant text-bias. Further, such images are mediated by a host of external factors, be they cultural, political, social or economic, which may all effect how such images are received and used in a classroom context. This is not to mention, also, the problematic nature of the process of locating, selecting and obtaining permission for appropriate VHS for classroom use among the ‘digital cacophony.’ So, although an increasing pervasiveness and accessibility of the visual provides opportunities for educators, it also presents problems and complexities that demand attention.

A key premise that underpins this investigation is that VHS contain unique properties. At first glance, it would be easy to see the commonalities that exist between visual and other historical sources. Indeed, some theorists seem to suggest a potential conflation between them. When, for instance, Wineburg (2001: 66) talks of texts as being “slippery, cagey, and protean, reflecting the uncertainty and disingenuity of the real world,” one senses he could just as easily be talking of visual sources as well. Yet there are properties within the visual that differentiate them from the textual. It is argued here that there is a need to express caution over reducing the visual to textual models, against the notion that ““visual texts” can be “read” ... just ... as the printed word” (Howells & Negreiros, 2012: p.1). These properties go beyond official pronouncements that they inherently bring something unique simply because they are different, as when the Ministry of Education said that visual aids were essential, since they enlisted “another sense in the effort of understanding” (Cannadine, 2011: 120). The relationship between image and text, as Mitchell (1994: 4) argues, is actually a highly complex one, if only from the point of view that images inherently incorporate text

and vice versa, so the separation of the two becomes immediately problematic. This study therefore tries to acknowledge and then look beyond reductive binary text-image positions and comparisons. It also focuses on how VHS are essentially working, and how in an educational context, there are several layers to how this working occurs.

Further, their place in the classroom as learning tools invites consideration; not a classroom as a hermetic, decontextualized space, but one that is bounded by broader social, cultural, economic and political considerations. To this end, the way this is described and analysed needs to set in a theoretical context. Figure 1.2 shows an initial, tentative conception of some of the fields and trajectories in which VHS operate. This diagram was developed in 2015, and is later contrasted with a diagram of how my understanding developed further by 2017 (see Chapter 6.3). It is supposed that VHS are mediated in a number of interrelated ways, in a sense that Bourdieu's

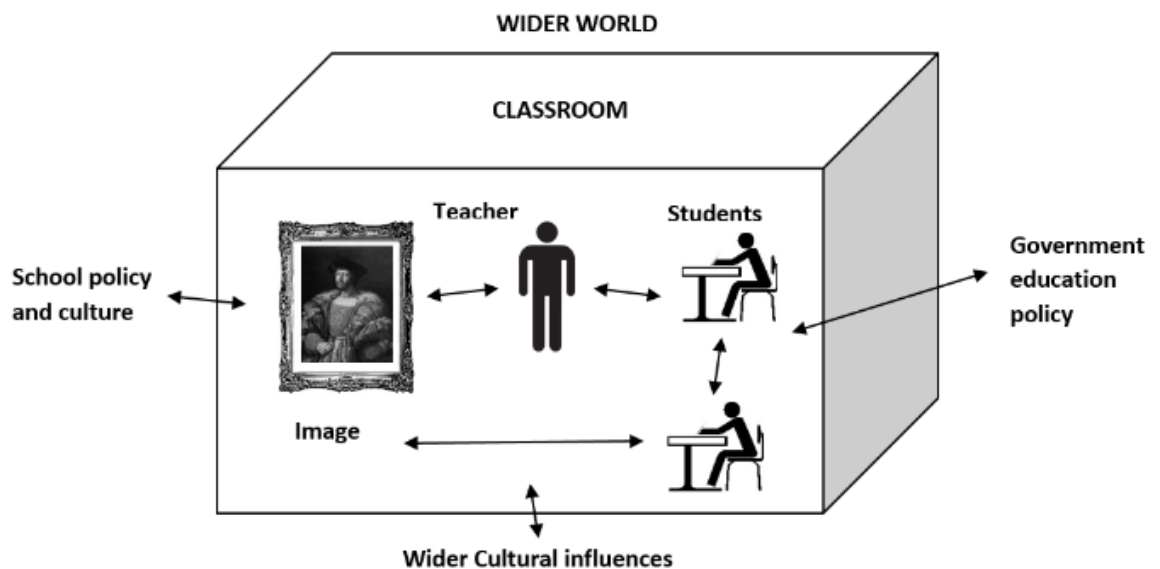


Figure 1.2: An initial conception of the way VHS may be experienced in the History classroom (Appendix 8.12.1)

theory of fields describes; the 'classroom' acting as a subfield of the broader fields beyond such a space within which it operates and interacts. It illustrates a starting point for understanding how the experience students have of VHS is mediated by the teacher, by other students, and by the immediate context of the classroom itself, both as a physical and social space. Acting on this is a sense of how outside influences mitigate this experience, such as the surrounding school policy and culture, which in itself is influenced by wider cultural influences and government education policy. The



diagram is also intended to reflect Massey's propositions about how classroom/gallery space is thought about, in terms of space "as a product of interrelations... as the sphere of the possibility of the multiplicity... (and) as always under construction" (Massey, 2005: 9). In this sense, the diagram is intended to reflect a temporal dynamism in contrast to its apparent stasis.

This study also aims to set the described experiences of working with VHS within theory. In terms of art, Panofsky (1967), Woodford (1983) and Eilam & Poyas (2012) all provide different frameworks to help structure thinking about VHS which intersect with theory around ways of thinking, especially constructivist frameworks, where "people make their own sense of things in a unique way" (Bartlett & Burton 2007: 124) which in turn reflects the discipline of History as understood where "we *construct* the past," as Terdiman (1993: 7) claims. Some of the ideas of Biesta (2017) reposition the role of the teacher in the learning process, a position Fordham takes, albeit within a more 'traditional' framework. There are also important differences between a number of these theoretical positions that need to be acknowledged; Piaget, for instance, makes limited reference to the political nature of learning whilst others, such as Biesta and the Marxist materialist Vgotsky, recognise that learning is inherently political. In the context of this research, then, there needs to be recognition that such frameworks are both useful and limited in different ways when applying them to analyse the use of VHS in classroom contexts.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This investigation is focused on a main question, with three associated subsidiary questions, which are;

**Main question:** *How do students, teachers and education professionals experience visual historical sources in the teaching and learning of History?*

#### **Subsidiary Questions;**

- *How can the experiences of students, teachers and education professionals using visual sources in the teaching of History be described?*

- *How can these descriptions be understood?*
- *What implications for teacher pedagogy may be drawn from this study?*

In analysis, these subsidiary questions will be treated sequentially, ultimately informing the main research question; the first focusing on how experiences with VHS are described; the second putting these descriptions into theoretical context; before finally considering what implications these may have for teacher pedagogy.

All of these link to an assumed gap between practice and the potential that VHS can bring to the classroom in terms of developing knowledge and understanding, as well as promoting critical thinking. This research intends to map out and better understand this gap, and in conclusion consider any possible ways forward. It also acknowledges, however, that other factors such policy and curriculum demands may mitigate the use of VHS. In addressing the questions there will also be an inherent exploration of issues of intertextuality, of the ways teachers and education professionals support students in working with other historical sources, rather than seeing VHS as isolated from them.

#### **1.4 Defining terms and parameters**

This investigation focuses on three named actors within this research; students, teachers and education professionals. The term ‘students’ here refers to secondary (11-18) students within the English education system. Those involved in this instance come from a large co-educational state comprehensive school in the South –East of England which serves a diverse catchment area in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic background. It also has a high proportion of SEND students (OFSTED 2014), though ability levels on entry are broadly in line with the national average. The term ‘teachers’ refers specifically to three teachers who worked in this same school. They reflect a mix of gender (two male and one female) and ethnicity (one white British, one Asian British, and one white American), as well as a variety of experience and backgrounds. Finally, ‘education professionals’ is a label used to refer to those with current or recent experience of working in galleries and museums in England with secondary (11-18) school students in the field of visual arts and History. In this instance, they are all education professionals who practice in prominent galleries in

London. This label is not to denigrate the role teachers play, but to mark a distinction in the sites and nature of the roles of education professionals and teachers. All of these actors are described further in the 'Pen Portraits' in Chapter 4, 'Context of the research'.

The term 'experience' is a deliberately broad term, encompassing how the meaning students make of VHS is developed as a group, underpinned by theorists such as Berger & Luckman (1967: 13) who see how "reality is socially constructed." Visual sources in this study are referred to as "visual historical sources," or VHS, which refer specifically to *still* imagery, encompassing 2-D media such as painting, photography and political cartoons, and specifically in their intertextuality and in the context of their deployment as sources of evidence in the teaching of History in the secondary school classroom or education space in a gallery.

Relating a study of VHS to Bourdieu's conception of 'field,' we might equate VHS as the "larger field," whereas genres such as photography are instances of a "subfield," where "each subfield, while following the overall logic of its field, also has its own internal logic, rules and regularities" (Grenfell, 2008: p.70). While some account will be made of the differences between such instances of 'internal logic' and their relation to the whole field, this will be taken only so far as it directly informs or qualifies accounts of how students, teachers and educational experts experience VHS, rather than exacting, in-depth comparison of the nature of different subfields which, whilst important, go beyond the focus of this study.

Such sources in this study are seen through the lens of the discipline of teaching History, with its own specific knowledge-base and pedagogical approach that needs to be seen as politically embedded, where choices about what History and how History is taught are contested. As Guyver (2013: 51) observes, "there are some strongly held and deeply entrenched positions about what function a national history curriculum should fulfil." In turn, this is informed by a variety of cultural and societal factors which are fluid and at times discordant, nudged by a mainstream media some see as

preferring “to intensify disagreement rather than to explore common ground” (Cannadine, Keating & Sheldon: 2011 p.231).

The terms ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ refer specifically to practice in UK schools, though the broader theory around VHS obviously has wider, transnational implications. While there is a focus on state Secondary schools, there is some practice referred to by professional educators that is happening in Primary schools that helps to inform the context for older students, but it should be stressed that ultimately this study focuses on Secondary school students only. A key element of the teaching and learning process is also an acknowledgement that the relationship between students and teachers is very important, and should not be decontextualized.

It has also not been possible to discuss and account for the multiple ways in which different disciplines account for the use of VHS: philosophy, sociology, art history, psychology and neurology – what Mitchell (1994: 9) calls a “motley array of disciplines” - all vie to have something to say about the way VHS can be experienced. Where they are all drawn upon, however, is rather in the practical concerns around how students experience and understand VHS in the History classroom, and how they might directly inform this.

### **1.5 Self as researcher**

It is important to acknowledge my own professional stance with the research. Whilst in the methodology section in particular I will examine the relationship between my own position and the data gathering process, in a broader sense the way in which my professional position has changed over the course of the investigation needs accounting for. At the start of the initial process, I was a teacher and Director of Learning at the Secondary school where I was intending to gather my data. In this sense, my role as a researcher would have had quite a specific dimension to be accounted for. Before I came to the point of data gathering, however, I had left the school and was working in History ITE (Initial Teacher Education) and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) at the Institute of Education at University College London, which created another dimension. However, as the research occurred only a year after

I had left the school, I still had a relationship, albeit more disconnected, with some of the research participants. This change in dynamics was something I had not predicted at the start, but was aware needed to be considered in terms of the dynamic relationship between the researcher and research accounts. This is seen within the concept of reflexivity, understood here as where “we need to monitor our own sociality within a more fluid social as this informs how we make sense of our research experience” (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2010: 87). Certainly, my position has been fluid and complex as a researcher moving between professions, with consequent shifting trajectories of social and professional capital that have informed the research process.

### **1.6 In summary**

Whilst VHS appear at once to pose specific problems for the classroom, they also suggest rich rewards in strengthening the quality of how students conduct historical interpretation. This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how they are experienced, and the implications this make have for classroom practice. In the current era of Mitchell’s conception of the ‘pictorial turn,’ subsumed by digital imagery, the study of how the visual operates in the politically contested terrain of History education, seems to acquire more urgency.

This thesis consists of five further chapters that seek to contextualise, describe and analyse experiences of using VHS. Chapter 2 sets this investigation in context by providing a brief literature review of ways in which the intersection between history, education and the visual have been theorised and understood. The methodology and methods of this research will then be outlined and explained in Chapter 3 before the data analysis section, Chapter 4, which includes descriptions of experiences with theoretical context in the form of seven main themes which emerge from the data. Finally, Chapter 5, the conclusion, will look at the implications of the data, both in terms of practice within the classroom and beyond. Here it will be argued that experiences of all research participants can be thought of in terms of axes, such as *easy-difficult* and *transparent-opaque*, that encapsulate different dichotomies inherent in VHS, and how different theoretical frameworks, such as Hall’s understanding of cultural identity, provide a way in which these axes can be conceptualised as states of

'becoming' and as a mode of 'hybridity.' This in turn has implications for pedagogical practice in the teaching of History.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to establish how VHS are experienced in learning situations in a theoretical context, to better understand where the data might sit in at times complementary, and at times competing, ways of thinking about them. A funnelling approach is used here, consisting of three parts. Firstly, a broad understanding of what VHS are will be outlined by looking at ways in which they are understood to exist as a concept and how they sit in an intersection between visual theory and other disciplines. Secondly, analysis will encompass a survey of the social, economic, and particularly political contexts in which VHS operate; the way they are seen as representations of memory and truth, particularly as a form of testimony; an overview of how VHS are seen in their intertextuality; and finally, a brief survey of writing on how form can shape interpretation of VHS. The third part concerns how VHS are seen to operate in educational spaces in the teaching of History. This covers literature on how VHS are 'seen' in the classroom, including the issue of time spent in looking and frameworks that have been developed to describe a hierarchical process of visual interpretation; the physical contexts in which VHS are seen, such as the notion of juxtaposition; how the impact of the pre-knowledge of students coming to VHS can be accounted for, and pedagogical approaches towards using VHS.

Two challenges present themselves immediately. First, disciplines such as history, philosophy, media studies, sociology, art history, education, psychology, or recently emergent disciplines such as visual studies and memory studies, all seem have something to say. How to account for these voices in a coherent way when incoherence, overlapping and contradiction seem to emanate, is problematic. Second, the form any such review should take in aspiring to be structurally cogent is similarly challenging. Unhelpfully, issues such as truth, testimony and memory easily meld into each other, making categorisation slippery when reviewing the literature. Yet in another sense, maybe this helps develop an appreciation of the complexity of how VHS work, and of how we can see them in new ways.

## 2.2 What is a ‘visual historical source’?

In the context of this study, a ‘visual historical source’ (VHS) is understood as having four key properties;

- i) It is *static*. This is taken to mean it does not move in the way film moves through time, which is beyond the scope of this study, but not that as a static framing it may still be open to revision and adaptation.
- ii) It is *two-dimensional*. This is not to deny its portrayal of the three-dimensional, or its inherent materiality, but it is not considered a 3-D material object in the sense a piece of sculpture may be understood. As with film, this is not to marginalise the importance of other visual media, but simply to bound this investigation into something practically manageable.
- iii) It *portrays history*. Whilst it could be argued that all visual sources are inherently historical, here it is taken that it potentially relates to an aspect of History that students can learn about in educational spaces.
- iv) It is considered an *historical source* in its own right. There is a subtle but significant distinction here between the term ‘source’ and ‘evidence,’ which can often be conflated in learning situations. A source can, and often will be used in the practice of history *as evidence of something*, but in their own right, decontextualized from lines of historical enquiry, this is a sufficient but not necessary requirement.

## 2.3 VHS in broader context

Firstly, VHS are considered as human constructions rather than as natural, fixed entities. A key area where the philosophy of history interweaves with the use of visual sources is in the sense of both being forms of artifice; human constructions that are essentially rooted in human consciousness and subjectivity, forever a step removed from actuality. An important aspect of this is the recognition that sources are read through the lens of the present, where “every true history is contemporary history” (Croce, 1921: 12). Yet this belies a more nuanced view that moves to a way of seeing the past through different subsequent moments of the past, which themselves may



inform the present. Card's (2008) concept of "Double Vision," of how one time period views another is a compelling observation, but could be tempered and expanded by remembering that though the past is recreated by the present, this in itself is influenced by past ways of seeing, as part of a historical narrative, rather than as an ahistorical construct isolated in time.

Visual sources can play a key role in constructing knowledge of the past. Husbands (2003: 26) emphasises this, seeing them as "the evidence base of history (that) provides us with a web of materials which makes possible the construction of historical understanding." The dynamic between the idea of the visual, and the epistemological idea of knowledge in terms of what is perceived to be true, is a fluid one. Sontag (1979: 93), for instance, in seeing photography as "an instrument for knowing things" sees them as conflated, and other writers follow her lead in stressing the idea of the visual as a form of "testimony" (Burke, 2001: 99; Holloway & Beck, 2005: 177). Taking this further, Hall (1997: 7), in his work on representation, sees a duality in the visual of being both a reflector and agent of reality. "Does visual language," he asks, "reflect a truth about the world which is already there or does it produce meanings about the world through representing it?" This binary could be seen more expansively: it could be argued they do both, and in ways that may inform each other.

Secondly, VHS are inherently politically situated and implicated. It is the sense of History having a "directly political resonance" especially in "constructing national accounts of the past and thereby the present" (Black, 2007: 58), that seems particularly prescient, both in the sense of how "history has also been important in the creation of particular national identities" (Cannadine, Keating & Sheldon, 2011: 220), and in constructing other social and personal identities within this. The visual arts can play a seminal role in this; as Cambridge academic Kant (2016) observes, "both history and the arts are part of the ideological natures of a country... (where) history has also been important in the creation of particular national identities." Such positioning occurs within a wider debate over the meaning of History education in England, reflecting what Guyard (2013: 72) calls a "discourse of derision" between the government and teachers, originating from debates in the 1960s that have recently

played out over National Curriculum reforms where history has “had to justify its place in the curriculum” (Cannadine, Keating & Sheldon, 2013: 160), over both the content of what is taught and the tension between more traditional and progressive pedagogical approaches. Teachers operate within this climate, reflecting how the choices and pedagogical approaches in using VHS are tainted with power arrangements that need to be accounted for.

The political dimensions around VHS also play out in a variety of ways around the power to see. Mirzoeff (2009: 5) argues that “vision is always a question of the power to see,” where “to look is to assert power” (D’Alleva, 2016: 104), and Sontag (1979: 155) argues images can be seen as “a means of appropriating or gaining power over something.” Yet this is not as straightforward as may first appear: in terms of the commodification of images in a capitalist society, Holloway & Beck (2005: 4) argue that such acts of seeing may be “compromised and implicated in the machineries of domination they may seek to expose,” and in so doing they may, as Connerton (2004: 30) believes, “legitimate a present social order” rather than subvert it. This capacity of images to work in ways not originally intended points towards the volatile and vicarious webs of power in which they sit, as alluded to in the example of the Rokeby Venus (Figure 2.1), cited by one of the professional educators interviewed for this research. Slashed in 1914 by suffragette Mary Richardson in the National Gallery “as a protest against the government” (Raeburn, 1973: 226) and against the “sensuous”

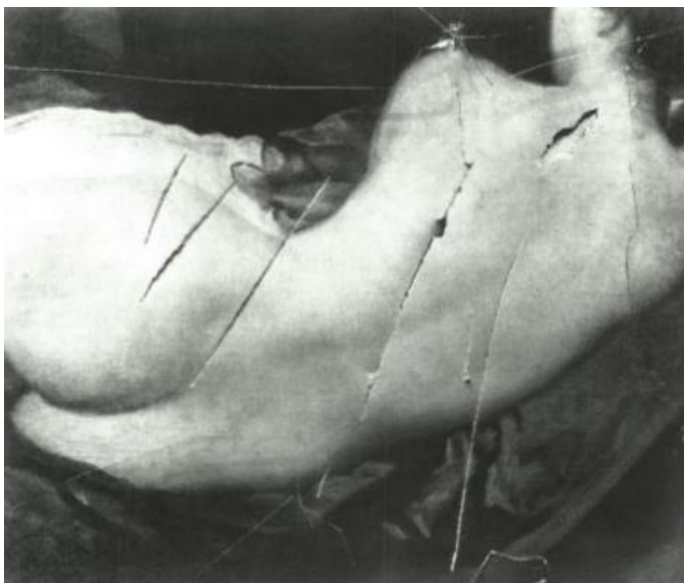


Figure 2.1: Damage sustained in 1914 after an attack on the painting by Mary Richardson (The National Gallery) Appendix 8.12.

(Crawford, 1999: 597) way she believed men had gloated over the nude, her attack on the painting revealed the way political context had changed the meaning of the image.

Another case of the political aspect of visual imagery has been expressed in terms of the concept of the 'gaze.' Different gazes have been variously referred to as "the normative Western" (Johnston, 2006: 94; Burke, 2001: 125); "the male" (Mirzoeff, 2014: 53), "the colonial" (Butler, 2000: 142); "the white gaze" (Fanon, 1967: 93-112; Pratt & Troccoli, 2013: 26; Burke, 2001: 125); "the scientific" (Burke, 2001: 125; Johnston, 2006: 94); and "the tourist" (Cronon, 1985: 6; Nye, 1997: 23; Butler, 2000: 125; Silber, 1993: 78). Yet there is a danger that such perspectives may be seen as discrete, isolated from each other and fixed. Instead, it can be argued that such gazes need to be seen in dialogic relationship to each other, in the production of multiple overlapping notions of seeing. Gazing, for instance, can be seen as both a gendered and colonial phenomenon simultaneously, which may complement as well as grate against each other in different ways. It is also integrally concerned with issues of what both educators and students can see and have access to in educational spaces, as well as what is obscured and hidden from them.

Economic and cultural considerations, as well as political ones, provide further ways within which VHS operate. Adorno's (1991: 2) view that all forms of art "bear the stigma of capitalism" has gained traction in Marxist and postmodern thinking where, as Waugh (1992: 5) describes, art is seen "as but another commodity." A key aspect of this is how financial considerations, as political, mitigate the visual and how it works in multiple ways, whether blatantly in the form of art "as marketing a product" (Murdoch, 2001: 73) or more subtly, attempting to transcend or subvert economic structures may engage with them nevertheless as pastiche and irony. Visual images need to be situated in their cultural contexts too. Said's (1991: 4) belief that "texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and... part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" can be equally applied to images, and taken further; images can be seen to be historical "events" not just in their production but their consumption too, where following their

production they are potentially endlessly consumed, or not, in a series of historically contingent interpretations.

It is within such a context that the function of images needs to be considered. As this study is looking at the experience of working with VHS, it is important to understand what it is they are specifically thought to *do*. A survey of various texts reveals an array of possible functions, to which this list is certainly not limited; as a record (Worster, 2004); as nostalgia (Wildcat, 2007); as ideological (Rawlinson, 2009); as moral (Wood, 2000); as educative (Cannadine, 2011); as a warning (de Botton, 2004); as a reinforcer or challenger of norms (Schama, 2005); or, as philosophical (Emerson, 2008). Such functions also need to be seen as unstable, fluid, multiple and relational, where they are liable to cut loose from intended function to become something other. All told, for educators such functional complexity may seem bewildering, yet also provocative and powerful for the classroom.

It is also necessary to consider how images are embedded in claims to represent truth, knowledge and reality; ontological underpinnings that are inherent in the study of History. The relationship between art as a representation of reality is highly complex and at times misleading, malleable, ironic and political. Picasso's aphorism that art is a lie that tells us the truth about reality (Wineburg, 2001: 133) hints at this at times paradoxical relationship. The space which opens up between what Bourdieu describes as "what we express is always a *representation*, it is not the thing itself" (Grenfell, 2012: 23) is both fluid and contestable. To add a further complication, it is a space that Foucault (1970: 9) claims is unutterable. His assertion that "it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say" alludes to the tension in appearance and language that can never fully be articulated. A further irony in this space is that whilst an image may be seen as "something other than "the real thing"", yet it has the potential to give as much pleasure and moves the observer as much as the "authentic" one" (Boscagali, 2015: 90). This property of artifice matters is problematic and subjective, and plays out in VHS in issues of authenticity and reliability.

A particular philosophical aspect of this has been the debate around the singular, dual, or even multiple capacity of images to communicate different ideas or representations simultaneously. This paradox was negated by Aristotle (Aristotle/McKeon ed, 2001: 737) who claimed “it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be,” which Russell (1998: 40) later framed as the “law of contradiction” and Fromm (1942: 57) as “paradoxical logic.” The issue of how in this research an image can be described simultaneously as, say, *clear-opaque*, is explored by Mitchell (1994). Philosophically, he analyses how the Duck-Rabbit form of what he describes as a ‘metapicture’ (see Figure 2.2) reveals a capacity for images to hold dual positions simultaneously. Whereas

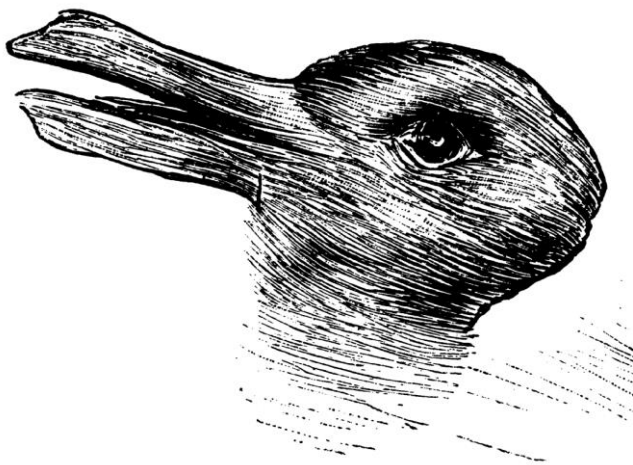


Figure 2.2: Duck/Rabbit as a ‘metapicture’ (Mitchell, 1994). See Appendix 8.13.

Gombrich (2002: 5) suggests that “we cannot experience alternative readings at the same time,” Wittgenstein unsettles this by suggesting it can be seen as a composite, synthetic figure at the same time, where “the search is neither for a duck nor for a rabbit, but for a curious hybrid that looks like nothing else but itself” (Mitchell, 1994: 53). Whilst this reflects a capacity of this particular image, it is interesting how this property might be analogous to other forms of image displaying inherent internal contradictions. It also has direct relevance to issues that later emerged in the research data (Chapter 6.3).

Visual imagery can also be seen as a site of memory. There is an asymmetrical relationship between memory and images, where memory of an object is likely to be accompanied by an image of the object, and yet the image cannot be what constitutes memory (Russell, 1912: 80). Photographs in particular are often taken as sites of memory, as coding the past, but they are also a battle of forgetting and not seeing. Hoskins (Holloway & Beck, 2005: 171) talks of “new memory” with the digitisation of

media storage, which has also helped congeal a “collective visual memory,” especially of iconic events and how this relates to popular culture. Such forms of collective memory, as Kansteiner (2016) reflects, are not designed for self-criticism; rather, they are “comfort zones,” in a similar way that black and white photographs may present a “nostalgic mode” (Holloway & Beck, 2005: 251). These ways and others in which memory operates with VHS can also have potentially political implications. The claim, for instance that “memory only seeks to rescue the past in order to serve the present and the future,” (Rieff, 2016: 22) shows the act of ‘seeing’ as having political ends. Individuals remember in the social frames to which they belong, which filter what is seen, and this in turn raises issues of what is shown and suppressed in the formulation and reformulation of memory in society. This is reflected in the visual aspect of the “culture wars” of the present, such as the controversy over the Confederate flag, flown above the South Carolina capitol (BBC, 2015a), or the #RhodesMustFall campaign to eradicate the visual iconography of Cecil Rhodes at Cape Town and Oxford University (BBC, 2015b).

Another factor influencing visual imagery is the way they can be augmented and interrupted by their intertextuality. In the way images relate to text, I argue in this research that the claim that ““visual texts” can be “read” ... just ... as the printed word” (Howells & Negreiros, 2012: 1) seems reductive and misleading. Instead, others pose the question of how image and text “convey different ideas” (Desai, Hamlin & Mattson, 2010: 170). The non-linearity of visual information in terms of its spatial arrangement, for instance, invites a non-linear reading that is different to the way the printed word is read. Further, pictures have a directness, in contrast to words which “help them (viewers) stand back from immediate impressions” (Howells & Matson, 2009: 120). There is also a dynamic relationship between words and images, where each can “transform” the way the other is read (Wood, 2000: 301) to the extent that Barber (2010: 40), in her work on seventeenth century English Civil War prints, sees how visual imagery “distorts and manipulates the text, illustrating it, exaggerating it, confusing.” This dynamic interpretation moves away from a situation where “visual display is handmaiden to the explication of the text,” (Felton & Allen, 1990: 84)

towards something more dialogic and complex, which has implications for classroom practice.

The idea of pictures as bearing witness is a key aspect of the claims of images to possess a sense of historical truth, especially in the teaching of History. Gombrich's (1999: 49) notion of "the eyewitness principle", used "to describe the demand to see the events told by poets and historians re-enacted as if they were happening in front of the audience" is problematised by Burke (2001: 15), who identifies how "the testimony of images, like that of texts, raises problems of – context, function, rhetoric, recollection, secondhand witnessing." He also highlights their role as "mute witnesses," complicated, as Foucault (1970: 14) has stated, by the difficulty of translating their testimony into words. Added to this, different visual forms have at different times been perceived as playing out this capacity to witness in different ways. Harvey (2012: 83), for instance, talks of how photography transformed the way people saw suffering during the American Civil War, where "for many citizens these photos allowed them to become virtual witnesses to the war," where the act of witnessing seems "entangled with the wielding of power" (Wallace, 2006: 175) in ways that may not always reveal themselves openly. These issues invite a reading of VHS in the classroom that moves from issues of presentism to a more nuanced understanding of the intended reception of images in the time in which they were produced.

Another way in which this sense of concealment plays out is in how images have seemingly paradoxical properties of being sites of both presence and absence. Images often depict absences which can take a variety of forms that are often politically situated. Hakewell, for instance, painted a series of Jamaican plantations, often taking the slave quarters as his vantage point, and so omitting them (Walvin, 2001: 70) to provide a benign, romanticised image of plantation life for a paying elite. Absence is constructed by both the artist and the viewer in an interpretive process. In referring to the natural landscape, for instance, Emerson (2008: 38) observed that "the ruin or blank space that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye." Warranting further consideration are factors that influence the interpretive process in the sense that Berger (1972: 1) identifies how "the way we see things is affected by what we

know and believe”; the implication here seems to highlight a need for educators to identify and acknowledge the kinds of understandings students come to History lessons with.

Particular to imagery are the visual properties inherent in the *form* of a visual work. An awareness of form marks a shift from looking at *what* is being shown to *how* it is being shown, and how the form is capable of both reflecting and disseminating the message of the image. In terms of classroom practice, this is often an area which seems neglected in the literature, but which can play an important part of the interpretive process. Rose (2012: 52) refers to this notion of what she calls “compositional interpretation,” which in terms of visual images looks at “what they are”, rather than for “what they do or how they were or are used.” Here, form as much as content plays an integral part. Psychologists have connected the idea of seeing with that of form. Frisby (1980: 110), for instance, identifies what he calls “principles of grouping,” where “the eye is immediately caught by certain structures.” Debates have also circled around the relationship between form and content; Fry (1996: 381) sees the total separation between them as impossible. Other critics such as Bell have contested this with what he refers to as the idea of “significant form” which involves experiencing “the tension controlled in a painting” (Bywater, 1975: 74). There is a danger that more literal historical interpretations of images in the classroom may tend towards the narrow, something an appreciation of form may counter by broadening the interpretive process. In studying form, Rose (2001: 58) sets out some clear areas of inquiry; colour, spatial organisation, light, and expressive content. Howells and Negreiros add to this the concept of compositional “balance,” or what Fry (1981: 22) describes as “attractions to the eye,” emphasising less art’s attempts to portray reality than the communication of emotion. Bell (1987: 6) also explores the emotional aspect of art, where works of art as a starting point provoke “the personal experience of a peculiar emotion.” Like Rose, other theorists develop similar approaches when studying form: Taylor (1981: 63), for instance, talks of such elements as colour, line, light and dark, volume, plane, and towering over them all the notion of composition, of “how part related to part and the whole.” He even goes so far as to conflate some of the boundaries that have been developed in art theory into a specific way of viewing



art. His term “expressive content” (Taylor, 1981: 51) refers to what he calls the unique fusion of subject matter and form in works of art, echoing Clark’s method of seeing an image initially as a whole. This is a challenge. It is suggested here that teachers and students seldom talk of issues of the form of a visual source, preferring instead to mine it for content, which preclude other ways of seeing an image that offer interpretive richness.

## **2.4 VHS in educational spaces**

Having outlined some of the broad contexts around the use of VHS, this next section looks to critically analyse the literature concerning what educators do with VHS and what students experience in learning with them.

One puzzle students are confronted with is the paradox in which images invite surface glancing and reading that masks a deeper complexity. In an educational context, Fetter (2012: 15) claims that “learning to see ... visual images must also be recognised as essential to the learning process,” whilst specifically in relation to the study of History, Nead (2010: 491) believes this “essential” process has two key components; “history in pictures should be hard to retrieve and involve an act of viewing as much as historical interpretation.” In a study of the use of visual resources in a secondary school in Wales, Jones (2000: 260) concludes that her results suggest that “pupils in year 7 (11-12 year-olds), if not earlier, need to be taught the skills of 'reading' or analysing visual resources.” Yet such claims seem wishful; “must be,” “should be,” and “need to be” are conditional. There’s an implication that the actual act of students’ viewing needs to come from the margins of practice to be more explicitly foregrounded. Italian researchers have gone further to identify the paradox of viewing that clearly emerges from this study; that in using historical sources in a school context, “images are easier to read than written ones,” yet in delving further “the interpretation of images becomes much more complex” (Fasulo, Gidaret & Pontecovro, 1998: 133). This statement itself seems paradoxical: we might think that images cannot simultaneously be easier yet more difficult to read. Yet maybe inadvertently Fasulo, Gidaret & Pontecovro, are identifying a key property of VHS, wherein opposing tensions of

accessibility and inaccessibility can coexist in a potentially disruptive relationship, depending on how they are acknowledged and interpreted.

Boundaries between meanings of words that describe practices of looking can be opaque, subjective and pliable, which may lead to some confusion over how such words may describe what different forms of looking are *doing*. Boundaries between “seeing,” “gazing,” “looking,” “observing,” “viewing” and “glancing” can be porous as they flit between more technical definitions and broader cultural understandings. Some, for instance, identify the difference between “seeing” and “looking” as the former being a process of “arbitrarily” observing, whilst looking is an “act of choice” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001: 10). The notion of “I see” being a literal act of seeing, or a common phrase describing an act of understanding, exemplifies the ambivalent and problematic nature of language. In such a jumble of contested language and meanings, however, some consensus seems to rest on the importance of creating time and space to properly ‘look.’ Perkins (1994: 3), for instance, argues art must be “thought through,” and not just a passing glance, and Morris (1989: 4) concurs that “the longer you look, the more you will tend to see.” However, this denies the diminishing returns of looking over a period of time, how different viewers may look in different ways and how this changes over time, and whether, in practice, it is maybe possible to see ‘less’ over time. Further, in pragmatic terms, lack of curriculum time constraints may also impede more immersive viewing.

In a specifically educational context, Jones (2010: 260) wonders in the conclusion of her research, “to what extent are pupils given sufficient time in the classroom to assess the information available to them in visual sources generally?” Tormey stresses the importance of this, insisting “we cannot take in a detailed percept of the entire scene in a single glance; we see clearly only the part of the scene that the center of gaze happens to light on” (Livingstone, 2002: 76). This introduces the idea that it is not just the length of the time spent looking but also the way that images are seen that is important. Hochberg (1972: 69) develops this further by introducing the concept of memory, describing how as we can only remember a small number of unrelated items in immediate memory, so we see more in a scene than we can hold in immediate

memory. As a result, we learn about the world from a succession of glances to the point where most of the image is held not in the retina, but in the “mind’s eye.” This points to the possibility of a lapse between what we think we see and what we actually see. In terms of such a psychology of seeing, Gregory (1990: 330-331) talks of the separateness of the concepts of perceptual and conceptual meaning, the former being the equivalent of glancing, occurring in just a “few seconds,” whereas conceptual understanding “works over a far longer time-scale.” These ideas all converge on an emphasis on creating space and time to look that is potentially rewarded by a greater depth of critical analysis. What they omit, however, is that while this may seem a coherent aim, it is situated in the context of a contemporary ‘Snapchat’ world of limited, surface viewing time which militates, as with curriculum time limits, against this.

In the context of classroom practice, whilst there has been a call to arms to give more time for students to observe, pedagogical approaches diverge between the seemingly precise and mechanistic to the vague and ill-defined. Card (2011: 18), for instance, encapsulates the former in describing how “with each of the sources ... pupils were given time in silence to scrutinise the image, and encouraged to look at it up and down, left to right, and corner to corner.” In a related article (2004: 17), she emphasises that “a cursory glance is not enough ... pupils need to be trained to look at pictures.” West (1981: 8) himself believed “there is a necessary skill in looking at pictures; it must be taught, practised and encouraged, not taken for granted.” Specifically, in the History classroom, Card (2008: 38) calls for teachers to place greater emphasis on the need to consider both the process of looking and the time given to it. She develops this theme, highlighting the fact that in the present age, “much of what they watch is fleeting and ephemeral,” and therefore they “need to be trained to observe ... to linger over details and to reflect on what they see.” Sebba (1994: 40) agrees, describing looking as being a process “to learn to observe detail,” yet she does not go any further to indicate how this might be done or how this detail might be understood, whereas Rorty (2014: 1-2) goes further in starting to describe how this might be done, in saying

It takes concentrated time to see a painting... Your eye changes; the painting changes as you look: light, coloration, distance, perspective. You should look at a painting from different perspectives... you should focus on different aspects.

The consensus seems to lie in the need to take time to look, and that looking will enable students to in some way 'see more.' But, in the spatial, non-linear arrangement of visual information, how students do this, and to what ends, remains ill-researched and ill-defined.

Linked to ways of seeing are ways of making meaning from visual information. Panofsky's hierarchical categorisation of visual interpretation, developed in the 1930s, has in many ways defined and influenced thinking about them to this day. His iconographic approach distinguished three levels of interpretation of meaning in paintings; the preiconographical description, consisting of simply identifying objects and events within a painting; iconographical analysis, concerned with "conventional meaning," such as recognizing a battle as the Battle of Waterloo; and finally, iconological interpretation, concerned with intrinsic meaning, in Panofsky's (1967: 7) words, "ascertaining the underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion." The extent to which such categories bleed into and inform each other is less developed, however. One of Panofsky's key insights is that images are embedded in culture and need to be read in the context of an understanding of that culture and its codes. Jordanova (2012: 218) emphasises the importance of Panofsky's impact; writing on comparative visual analysis she sees scholarly traditions of iconography as being "at the heart of visual analysis." There are two aspects to his thinking here that have underpinned much thinking since; the *progressive and hierarchical* nature of interpretation, and the necessity for interpretation to be *historically contextual*, an aspect that Card (2008) develops further in her notion of "double vision"; seeing the past through the lens of other eras.

Whilst traces of Panofsky's thinking are embedded in much of contemporary thinking about VHS, other perspectives have emerged since which both elucidate and problematize his position. In Panofsky's mould, Eilam and Poyas's (2012: 280)

hierarchy of how the act of seeing develops over time starts with “a superficial examination” of an image through to “deeper observations” and ultimately toward a more “holistic understanding.” Yet a postmodernist view may see the act of looking as more refracted, with multiple processes occurring which all feed off from and influence each other in various ways at irregular times. In contrast to Eilam and Poyas, Arnheim (1974: 8) makes the case that when looking at visual art “one must, first of all, face it as a whole,” where “before we identify any one element, the total composition makes a statement that we must not lose.” The art critic Clark (1960: 17) gave an earlier echo of this when, whilst disclaiming any rules of looking, said “first I see the picture as whole,” to a point where finally he becomes “saturated with the work, so that everything I see contributes to it, or is coloured by it.” Clark’s observation that “there are many ways of looking at pictures, none of which can be called the right way” (1960: 15) may seem a welcome, accommodating compromise position, yet it says little of the relative merits of different positions. Whilst Burke (2001: 42) recognises that historians need iconography to help understand visual imagery, he sees this as working in conjunction with other approaches too, such as psychoanalysis, structuralism and especially reception theory. For students and teachers it could be argued that at least a recognition that there are diverse ways of looking at and forming meaning from VHS could be of benefit. Such recognition has pedagogical implications, encouraging differentiated rather than monolithic approaches that suit both the variety of learners and the variety of contexts in which meanings from VHS are constructed.

Politically, images constantly navigate democratic and totalitarian positions. The contemporary language of the visual is often peppered with language of liberal values such as ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, but not all with the same purpose. In the ‘selfie age’ some have (anachronistically) pointed to technology as helping to “democratise all experiences by translating them into images” (Sontag, 1979: 7). When she goes further to see viewers as consumers, where “the freedom to consume a plurality of images and goods is equated with freedom itself” (1979: 178-9), Sturken (2003: loc.3515) describes the act of viewing in Detroit, where patrolling police had become more accommodating to crowds viewing scenes of violence in terms of rights, where

“people have the right to look.” What neither develop, however, is a sense of how notions of accessibility and rights to view are mediated by an arrangement of social, economic, political and geographical paradigms that intersect with each other in different ways. Such rights can also be extended to the right *not* to look or to show. There is also a sense of democratic accessibility of the visual. Whilst Kinsey’s (1992: 11) claim that “everyone can understand a picture” may be contested, there is at least a *perception* of accessibility being described. Such considerations, whilst rooted in wider culture, can play out in the classroom in similar ways, in terms of who has power over what images are seen by whom, and in what context. To what extent learners have ‘a right to look’ at aspects of History is contingent on such contexts, which have ethical implications as well.

Visual images are also mediated by the physical and virtual sites in which they are presented, whether in a gallery, online or in a classroom. Such spaces and contexts can have an important effect on the way they are viewed, but they need to be understood in different ways. One is a sense of social space, where “the meaning of images depends on their social context” (Burke, 2001: 178). Velasquez’s ‘Rokeby Venus,’ (c. 1655) for example [see Appendix 8.13], as referred to earlier, had quite different meanings in different contexts; when being passed to the Dukes of Alba in Spain as part of a marriage portion, as it did when hung in the family home of the Duke of Wellington when he bought it in 1806, to that when it was slashed by suffragist Mary Richardson in the National Gallery in 1906, declaring

I have tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs. Pankhurst, who is the most beautiful character in modern history (Steinbach, 2004: 314),

and then again to a History lesson being taught in a classroom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It can also be seen as a physically intertextual one, where “the meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it” (Berger, 1972: 22). Here Berger refers not just to the nature of the space in which imagery is presented, but the relations within that space to other objects. In this

sense, the physical space may give cause for concern, when “pictures hung in a row tend to lose their individual identities – de-emphasising the individual item” (Gombrich, 1999: 115), or, in a metaphorical sense where “we are too often looking at the right pictures in the wrong frames” (De Botton, 2013: 209). Further, the mass circulation of images in digital space may have “greater power ... to enter into a dialogue with the culture” (Johnston, 2006: 111) than that which remains studio-bound. This has a big significance in schools where most of these senses of space may play out, notably in terms of social space where meaning may continually be negotiated by teachers and students in an on-going, iterative process.

The prior knowledge students bring with them plays a significant role in how VHS are experienced. Hernandez (1998: 119) sees this as a particular issue, claiming that

recently the constructivist approach to the teaching of the visual arts has paid little attention to the relationship between learners’ knowledge base and their knowledge-seeking strategies.

But whether, nineteen years on, this is still the case is contestable. Kyriacou (2009: 29) also emphasises how important it is for teachers to ensure they are “relating it to what they already know and understand.” Such a connection and acknowledgment of what students already ‘know’ is key for students. Davey (1999: 7), for instance, stresses how “seeing an image is more an instance of *recognising* what is evoked by an art work.” This idea of ‘recognising’ infers an identification with a prior-held visual vocabulary, which needs to be accounted for in some sense in the classroom. Card (2008: 39), with a teaching background herself, would suggest otherwise when she says “the most important thing I have learned is that a pupil seeking to make sense of a new image will try to link it to an image already familiar.” Phillips (2002: 62) also stresses that questions “have to be carefully planned,” and “realistic” in relation to student knowledge, which presumably would be difficult to do without initially eliciting some element of the form of that knowledge.

As part of the subjective process of how we view and interpret visual sources comes the idea that we are selective in what we see and how we choose to see it; that what is

being seen, in the context of how History is understood, is a construction not an objective given. Indeed, in one study, research indicated that “viewers of images can “see” things that are not there” (Griesdorf & O’Connor, 2002: 22). Historians such as Fukuyama (1992: 139) have alluded to the subjective nature of interpretation. ““History,”” he says, “is not a given...but a deliberate effort of abstraction in which we separate out important from unimportant events.” Gallagher (1997: 13) boldly claimed “In reaching my conclusions, I have gone to where the sources have led me,” yet others, such as Froude suggest this process is not as objective as Gallagher might present it. Instead, Froude observes,

history is like a child’s box of letters, with which we can spell any word we please. We have only to pick out such letters as we want, arrange them as we like, and say nothing about those which don’t suit our purpose (Evans, 2000: 54).

All of these point to the idea of history as a construction, in which VHS can be used both in terms of what they are made to reveal as well as suppress. How such interpretations are constructed is a central aspect both inherent in VHS as well as in how they are seen to be interpreted by students.

In their role in education, visual images have the potential to provide critical, intellectual thinking spaces. One way of viewing images is as intellectual puzzles, to be worked through, using interpretational lenses such as the semiotic, the form, the ideological, the iconographical or the hermeneutic, as Perkins (1994: 90) advocates in the need for “the cultivating of thinking dispositions” in exploring art. It is this capacity for the “visual arts (to) unlock space to think” (Meira & Rogers, 2015) that has clear pedagogical implications for the teaching of History. That “historia” originally meant “inquiry,” (Schama, 2005: loc. 4645) provides a sense of History as a process that is not accessible at first sight but which requires intellectual graft, where “being truly puzzled can be the first step toward finding an answer” (Dudziak, 2006: xx), that visual sources lend themselves to so readily. Elkins (1992: 2), in his aptly titled *Why Are Pictures Puzzles?* sees how “art history had learned to find dense complexity in even the most simple-minded picture.” This approach of searching for complexity and ‘puzzlement’ also has implications for how students can be encouraged to work with VHS.



McAleavy's (1998: 6) identification of "continuing problems" when working with sources implies the actual process of thinking that students go through, such as the "distinction between unsubstantiated opinions and "justifiable assertions"" that students, he claims, find troublesome. His call is unequivocal: there needs to be more done "on how pupils can link the evaluation and analysis of sources to the business of reasoning and argument" (1998: 15). Part of such a development is also alluded to by Fines (2006: 124), who identifies a need to "try to read between the lines, to ascertain deeper meaning" when working with textual documents. This can equally be applied to visual sources, where 'reading between the lines' ironically suggests a spatial ability to make inferences and deductions from visual cues that can be as demanding as textual ones.

In terms of the use of VHS as a tool in the construction of knowledge, Piaget's conception of learning following chronological stages of development has been criticised. Some prefer an alternative where stages have no fixed sequence and are not tied to chronological age, where "the three levels can be revealed amongst a group of children of almost any age" (Cooper, 1994: 103). Others have identified Piaget's neglect of the idea of constructing knowledge as a socialised process. Hattie (2012: 105), for instance, believes "cognitive development is a social process...that the intervention must encourage "social construction". Muijs and Reynolds (2011: 79) emphasise in their "principles of constructivist teaching" that "construction of knowledge is not just an individual thing." Palincsar (1998: 348) even goes so far to identify a social constructivist approach as being a "revolution (that) is perhaps best characterised as under way." While such a claim seems too all-encompassing, there is an added dimension here; the idea of how the social construction of knowledge can be applied to the way VHS are understood in the classroom in issues around who is doing the constructing, how, and to what ends. Hattie (2012: 43) picks up on this in talking about how teachers support in the construction of knowledge, where "attention needs to be given to *how* and not only to *what* the child is learning." But when Kyriacou (2009: 29) argues the case for students being "actively" involved in their learning, to "help make sense of the new experiences, and Fines (1994: 124) asserts that "good learning is always active learning," the concept of what constitutes 'active' is ill-

defined. Barton and Levstik (2004: 193) place it in the frame of enquiry-based learning. "People learn through enquiry," they claim, where

the process of gathering evidence to reach conclusions about important questions matches contemporary theories of human learning in which people are seen as active constructors of meaning.

Theories of knowledge construction have direct relevance for teacher pedagogies when working with VHS. Vygotsky, for instance, showed how concepts are learned deductively, through trial and error, and through experience which is socially formed "through a continuing process of interaction" (Daniels, Laudert & Potter, 2009: 119). In this framework of active learning, Dewey (2010: 79) saw the construction of knowledge as a dialogic process where the characteristic outcome of thinking is the connection of isolated facts through the introduction of "connected links or middle terms" that "create links back and forth between facts and meanings." In terms of the way VHS are understood, the ways in which individual parts of an image are comprehended and can be connected to produce a 'whole' composite image is important. VHS may provide a potentially useful medium for nurturing such a process of knowledge construction, though this may conflict with learning outcomes in classrooms focussed round more positivist, closed ends.

Within this constructivist framework, over the last decade the idea of "threshold concepts" has developed prominence, with interesting implications for helping understand how students in secondary schools construct knowledge through the use of VHS. Some see threshold concepts as being akin to a conceptual "portal" that opens up new ways of thinking about something, and "without which thinking cannot progress" (Land & Meyer, 2010). In this way, "they might be considered the crucial elements of disciplinary understanding: the things that make some students 'get it' while others don't" (LSE, 2015). In all of this, they see the power of this perspective as being in its role as "a lens through which to reconceptualise student progression and 'stuck places'" (Land & Meyer, 2010: 122), which may make it difficult to ensure that "bottlenecks experienced by students ... are overcome." The ironic visual metaphor of

a 'conceptual gateway' is not lost here, inadvertently suggesting the role of the visual as being in itself such a 'portal.'

The assumption, however, that a social constructivist pedagogy for working with VHS is preferable should not be immune to critique. Biesta (2015) critiques dominant discourses of the role of the teachers in the process of learning that has implications for the way VHS are used. Arguing the opposition between traditional and more progressive modes of teaching is too simplistic, he suggests there needs to be an acknowledgement that our understanding is limited in an ego-centric sense by ourselves; there is a 'third way' between authoritarianism and ego-centrism that reclaims the role of the teacher as a means of breaking out of what he calls a "more infantile point of view" that only takes itself as a point of reference, and towards one where teaching is not authoritarian. Yet it is argued here that Biesta's framework seems to mesh well with a constructivist approach to using VHS; one which widens both the contextual dimension in which they are viewed, as well as re-centring the role of the teacher in having a critical role to play in this.

Questioning is integral to how VHS are used in the classroom. Hattie's (2012: 84) belief that "more effort needs to be given to framing questions that are worth asking," is applicable to working with VHS, though what is meant by the 'worth' of questions needs questioning itself. Haydn, Arthur & Hunt (1997: 67) identify a taxonomy of questioning in History teaching where there is a tendency towards "an overuse of what may be called the "lower order" questions ... with only a limited use of the "higher order" questions." Garvey & Krug (1977: 53) go on to see the construction of knowledge as a clearly stepped approach in which the role of the teacher is key. In questioning, they say, "the root of a pupil's failure to answer a teacher's question lies in the fact that some step in the reasoning has been left out." Yet 'carefully planned' and 'step' approaches are open to critique: questioning, for instance, may be carefully planned, but ultimately ineffective. Linking back to Piaget's notion of shifting from concrete to abstract thinking, Birnbacher & Krohn (2004: 11) examine Socratic dialogue as a form of knowledge construction. Following similar lines to the inductive method, they see how such dialogic questioning is able to move "from the particular in

order to arrive at the general.” There is an interesting line of thinking here about how students move from the concrete to the abstract that has implications for the use of VHS, and the part Dewey’s notion of ‘dialogic thinking’ may play in this.

Other pedagogical approaches to working with VHS abound. One such is in helping structure thinking through annotation. Davies & Davies (2003: 49) start to explore this, claiming “annotation of a visual source is a good way of encouraging pupils to scrutinise an image in close detail,” but they don’t explicitly say how this could be done. A different aspect is developed by Desai, Hamlin & Mattson (2010: 12) who identify alternative approaches to explore possibilities in the use of art in the teaching of history, such as “juxtaposition, layering (and) borrowing.” Within all of this, Counsell (1999: 39) talks about “the tension between structure and independence,” which although for her is in the context of developing writing, can equally be applied to scaffolding responses to visual sources. This tension is one where “pupils need to be assured of a minimum of success and helped to take considerable learning risks,” in the context of which “the management of this tension is a key measure of the success of any teaching strategies.” A further reading of approaches to visual sources has focused on an access to the past through empathy. Gabella (1998: 32) cites the ability of art and photographs to inspire an empathetic connection with students, which “involved a sense of “presentness” about the subject rendered, as well as a sense of intimate understanding of her or his feelings, thoughts and motives,” chiming with Dewey’s (1938: 42) belief that “experience is emotional,” this seems an aspect of working with VHS that educators need to acknowledge.

The spaces where VHS are encountered also mediate how they are experienced. In this research, the two key areas this consisted of were ‘classroom’ and ‘gallery.’ While in some ways they can be conflated, they also need to be understood as discrete spaces in their own right, differentiated between ways in which they are seen to be public/private spaces for learning which are also porous. Massey (2005: 9) has much to say about how these contexts can shape and influence what happens in them in different ways, where

it is part of my argument... not just that the spatial is political, but rather that thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated ... can be an essential element in the imaginative structure.

This has implications for educational practice and the discipline of History, both of which need to be understood also as inherently political acts. And so, as Inglis (2005: 12) asserts, does art too. Taking a sociological view of art, his claim that “the sociological view tends to see ‘art’ as always thoroughly bound up with *politics*... in its widest sense” sees classrooms and galleries as spaces where politics is enacting and enacted on learners and educators both on micro and macro levels.

## 2.5 Conclusions

Six themes about the way VHS are experienced emerge from this review which seem particularly salient to this research. Firstly, pictures are inherently complex. Fasulo’s observation that images are “much more complex” than written sources runs counter to the surface visuality that invites superficial looking. Secondly, connected with this is a broad consensus on the need to give students necessary time to look to be able to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what is shown; (Morris, 1989; Gregory, 1990; Perkins, 1994; Sebba, 1994; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Card, 2008) all stress this. Thirdly, although visual evidence shares some of the same properties as textual evidence, it is spurious to claim that the textual and the visual are synonymous in the way they can be “read” (Howells & Negreiros, 2012). The specific form in which visual images convey information, in a non-linear way, is one way that differentiates the two. Fourthly, VHS are embedded not just in structures of power that work in different ways, but also in economic, cultural and social contexts that also need to be accounted for. Fifthly, as part of their complexity, images are particularly unstable and fluid in the way they specifically intersect with the teaching of History as a discipline. Not only are they products of the past, present and projected future, but are continuously reformed and reinvented in the ‘now’ to reflect how both past and future are imagined as a projection of the present. In this, Evans (2012: 487) recognises the duality of visual imagery “as things that construct as well as things that reflect actual historical processes.” Finally, it is argued that Biesta’s (2017) call for a “third way” between

notions of 'traditional' and 'progressive' pedagogies is desirable in developing effective praxis with VHS.

### 3. Methodology and methods

#### 3.1 Methodological position

This chapter outlines a description and explanation for the methodological approach and the specific methods used in this investigation. The approach I am taking is to show how issues raised in the research question about the experiences students, teachers and professional educators have with VHS are integral to the methodology and methods used to attempt to capture those experiences in a rigorous, ethical way that will enable coherent analysis of the data.

The ontological aspect of this research is understood as being “what... constitutes social reality” (Wilson, 2013: 80), or “the study of what exists” (O’Leary, 2010: 5). Within this I am aware that, as some have identified, “your own situation in the world and how you perceive it is likely to inform your ontological position,” (Costley, Elliot & Gibbs, 2010, 81); that as a History teacher my professional interest and engagement with interpretive processes has led me down this path and may have coloured my view, impacting on the research process itself. With this caveat, from Mason’s (2004: 15) ontological list, the properties of ‘social reality’ embedded in this investigation include such concerns as; “understandings, interpretations”; “representations, cultural or social”; and “constructions,” are all fundamental to this study.

I also include two other features Mason alludes to, but with qualification. One is the idea of specifically visual sources, as a constituent of social reality. Additionally, Mason’s descriptor of “one objective reality, multiple versions of reality” reflects an apparent dichotomy between ‘realism’ and ‘idealism’ that some modify by use of terms such as ‘subtle realism.’ In this instance, a form of ‘idealist’ ontology is adopted, referred to by Ritchie et al (2014: 5) as “subtle idealism,” the notion that “the social world is made up of representations constructed and shared by people in particular contexts.” In this sense, this investigation follows a constructivist position where what can be studied are “the meanings attributed to and the understandings of a social phenomenon... constructed by the social actors” (Matthews & Ross, 2010: 25). This ontological position is chosen as it reflects the inherently socially situated nature of

this investigation. Within this, a concept of ‘truth’ underlies the investigation, a truth in which ‘multiple versions of reality’ can exist, but it does not necessarily follow that they are all equally truthful. Truth in a postmodern sense is seen as a “slippery concept that is always political” (O’Leary, 2010: 5), but one that even so is perceived by participants in this investigation as being something in existence that has import. This is especially the case in the study of History and the kind of truth-claims made in the discipline, which themselves can be problematic. White’s “Metahistory” (1973: 8) for instance, argues the historian is actually producing a creative literary invention, where “every history... will be emplotted in some way.” Further, Black’s (2007: 64) identification of how history “*was* a term deployed to suggest truth and in no way was restricted to factual accounts” [my italics] when speaking about historic and literary representations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century has an ironic take now in what has been dubbed a world of post-truths and “alternative facts” (D’Ancona, 2017: 13). The idea of ‘factual’ accounts itself is also problematic. As Oakeshott (2004: 33) writes, “we nowhere find facts in so simple a state as can warrant us to take them as the only truth,” and where, more fundamentally “they involve judgements... we as individuals observe facts differently to each other.” To help account for this, a reflexive commentary of myself as researcher will be explicitly considered.

Epistemologically, in terms of “how we can know or find out about the social world and the limits to that knowledge,” (Ritchie et al, 2014: 7) this investigation is interested in the experience students have of visual sources when learning about History in the classroom; how teachers form part of this experience, interacting with it and shaping it, and in a broader context how education professionals in galleries work with such materials that may have implications for secondary classrooms. Each of these three groups – students, teachers, and education professionals – needs to be seen not in isolation but in how they intersect, inform and influence each other.

In this context, an interpretivist framework is used, which aims to account for “how people interpret the social world and social phenomena, enabling different perspectives to be explored,” (Matthews & Ross, 2010: 28) within the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of visual theory, History and education. Whilst this research is



situated predominantly in an inductive logic, which “involves building from the bottom up through observations of the world” (Ritchie et al, 2014: 7) it is not strictly so in the sense that data is explored “without a predetermined theme or theory in mind” (O’Leary, 2010: 261). While the epistemological position of this study is driven by the data that emerges, in the spirit of being as open as possible to new possibilities and insights, it is acknowledged that this is not untainted by preconceived theory and thematic concepts.

### **3.2 General approach and type of study**

In calling this research an ‘investigation,’ to avoid the ambiguity of a seemingly ‘catch-all’ phrase, it is necessary to outline what this investigation is, as well as what it is not, and the rationale behind choices made.

Firstly, this is a piece of qualitative research. Initial plans were to include a more mixed methods approach, consisting of a survey to front-end the investigation that could be analysed quantitatively, followed by interviews to qualify and help to explain the initial survey. It was felt, however, that the survey was unnecessary, even as an initial stage of the research, as it would be limited in helping capture the nuances and explanations for different experiences. Qualitative research, in being “highly contextual” and where the “main focus of research is to understand the ways in which people act and account for their actions” (Gray, 2004: 162) seemed more apt. However, in the coding of data in analysis, ‘points of contact’ between what for some are polarised positivist and constructivist approaches to inquiry, can be made. This process, where “qualitative data are quantified through an explicit structured interpretation, which seeks similarities in data and code responses” (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005: 50) is a step towards subverting the quantitative-qualitative binary, but is a step limited enough not to be called a fully ‘mixed methods’ approach.

Secondly, it is located in a constructivist framework. It studies how students, teachers and education professionals ‘experience’ VHS, appreciating the multiple perspectives and versions of reality that may emerge. Realities in this paradigm are seen to be

“local, specific and constructed; they are socially and experientially based, and depend on the individuals or groups holding them” (Punch, 2014: 17). Such constructions are seen as being “not more or less ‘true,’ in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated,” as well as being “alterable” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 111). When applied to the ways different groups experience VHS in an educational setting, this framework is therefore important in pointing not just to an evaluation of whether interpretations of VHS are ‘right or wrong,’ but in understanding how they come to be held in the first place, and the ways in which they may be said to be pliable.

This investigation adopts elements of a constructivist grounded theory approach, an adaptation of grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2008, 2014). This study is not an attempt at grounded theory in its purist, objectivist, positivist form. What it is, rather, is an intention to allow data to emerge from the different data-gathering activities, and to account for my own position as a researcher, with acknowledged pre-conceived theoretical concepts about how VHS may be experienced, in influencing the way such data may be interpreted.

Charmaz’s approach is an adapted version of grounded theory that stems from Glaser and Strauss’s original concept of an inductive approach of “the discovery of theory from data,” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 1) from which theory then emerges. My adapted version follows Charmaz’s take on grounded theory that moves from the positivist idea of data or theory being “discovered” to one where “we are part of the world we study ... we construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions” (Charmaz, 2014: 17). To this extent, there is a pragmatic acknowledgement that I was already bringing my own thoughts and preconceptions to the research project, which could not be avoided and which might run counter to the original form of grounded theory as Glaser and Strauss intended. So, it is in the spirit of answering Charmaz’s (2014: 339) challenge

for other scholars – old and new – to turn to the pragmatist heritage of grounded theory and to build on these antecedents while invoking twenty-first-century constructivist sensibilities

that I have adapted a form of grounded theory to suit. There is a tension, however, between the grounded theory thinking that researchers should “avoid forcing their data into preconceived codes and categories,” (Charmaz, 2014: 154) and the fact that from previous research and reading I already have preconceptions to contend with. The challenge for my research is to marry this with the notion of more “open coding” where “concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 101)

In terms of grounded theory being “infinitely adaptable as a method” (Urquhart, 2013: 178), as long as this is explained this is useful, as it points to an ability to amalgamate my own readings of interpretation of visual sources with a more open-minded approach. Yet debates over its use have developed “to the point that it seems like almost a religious dispute” (Urquhart, 2013: 186). There is a danger with grounded theory, as with thematic analysis, that it may “unwittingly produce decontextualized analyses.” To overcome this, there needs therefore to be an awareness that in fragmenting phenomena to codes and units, I did not lose sight of the relevance of the context within which those fragments were produced. I also acknowledge that in this small-scale study there was not the opportunity to reach a state of “saturation” (Taber, 2013: 145) where a fully developed theory emerges. In a sense, though, a form of constructivist grounded theory has the potential to give insights that I was not necessarily looking for, which is part of the reason for the choice of methodology. In sum, the use of constructivist grounded theory is not “completely open” but is justified in terms of seeking “to understand the constructs people use to understand ‘their’ everyday experiences... data collection is no longer a neutral process” (Gibson & Hartman, 2014: 59).

### 3.3 Data collections: Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and lesson observations

Figure 3.1, below, is a simplified linear overview of the data-collection process in this investigation.

	Stage 1➡	Stage 2➡	Stage 3
<b>Teachers</b> <i>3 History teachers from secondary school in West Sussex</i>	Pre-observation semi-structured interview	Lesson observation, using visual image(s) of teacher's choice	Post-observation semi-structured interview
<b>Educational Professionals</b> <i>3 from galleries/museums in the UK</i>	Semi-structured interview	As part of interview, description of recent learning session using VHS with students	
<b>Students</b> <i>6-8 in each focus group (mix of gender and ethnicity)</i>			Post-observation focus group held on the same day as each of the teacher lessons

Fig. 3.1 A simplified overview flow diagram of the investigation.

The left-hand column illustrates the three groups involved in the research; three History teachers who were all from the same comprehensive school, three focus groups of students from lessons that each of the teachers delivered, that incorporated a form of VHS of their choice, and three educational professionals who were not affiliated with the school, but rather worked in galleries and museums that used visual sources in the teaching of History to visiting school groups. The three stages indicate a chronological spread dimension. For the in-school research this represented a lesson observation using VHS (stage 2) framed by a pre- and post-observation teacher interview and a post-observation focus group using small groups of students selected from the lesson observed. For the professional educators, it was not pragmatically possible to observe their practice, so as part of their interview they were asked to describe and explain a recent example of practice using VHS with school groups that they had been involved with.

Broadly, the advantages of triangulation between the three groups of research participants underpin this approach, aiming to “expand the picture which the researcher has to look at” by viewing it from different angles (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995: 106), to help establish that, as much as possible, “the researchers see what they think they see” (Flick, 2005: 371).

For all three participant groups, the sampling rationale was mainly opportunistic. All three teachers were secondary History teachers who came from a school I had previously worked at. They had all informally given their consent to be part of this study before it started, and all seemed open to the idea of using VHS in their teaching. Similarly, the three education professionals were all educators I had established prior connections through work, all had different experiences of working with VHS in educational spaces and seemed open to being interviewed. Whilst the sample was geographically limited to London, this had pragmatic advantages in terms of organising interviews around work, as well as offering a richness of experience as all three worked in nationally prestigious galleries. Student sampling was primarily driven by teachers, who were invited to select a particular class they were planning on using VHS with (in this instance a Year 9 and two Year 10 classes). Student focus groups were selected by each teacher, within guidelines given to them, as explained below.

### **3.3.1 Student Focus Groups**

Three focus groups were run, one from each of the three observed lessons, to follow up on issues arising from the lesson observations in more detail, to get a deeper sense of how students talk about, understand and learn from VHS. The original target was for each focus group to contain approximately six students each: hopefully enough to facilitate group interaction, but not so many that some students’ voices may be marginalised. In reality, groups varied in size (from 6 students to 3), due mainly to contingent, pragmatic reasons. The aim was for the sample of students to be negotiated with the Head of History to include a gender and ethnic balance, as I was originally also interested in exploring issues of student diversity and how this is played out in working with VHS in the History classroom. Again, in reality this mix wasn’t always evident, partly because the selection was also purposive in leaning towards

seeking volunteers from those students who would engage in the process more willingly and who were comfortable with volunteering their opinions. As selection was also ultimately in the domain of the classroom teacher, the broadly representative mix that represented gender and ethnic diversity was not always reflected in the teacher-selection. I sought to obtain parental and student permission to record and transcribe the focus group discussion, following advice that this recording will “work best” (Bryman, 2012: 504) in terms of providing an accurate recording of voices and a more effective facilitating of discussion by myself. In my pilot study I relied on handwritten notes which was a multitasking challenge, so I wanted try a different approach to make the flow of the group discussion, and its transcription, more effective. The purpose of the audio recorder was explained to students before focus groups started.

Focus group discussion as a research method was chosen as it provided an opportunity to “study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it” (Bryman, 2012: 504). The crux of this, as a number of theorists suggest, is the value of its interactionist framework and the potentially new perspectives that may emerge from this. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 288; Gray, 2009: 233; Flick, 2006: 197; and Wilson, 2013: 117). The potential richness of such interaction is highlighted in the belief that the “researcher may stand a chance of ending up with more realistic accounts of what people think, because they are forced to think about and possibly revise their views” (Bryman, 2012: 503). Yet focus groups are not without issues; for instance, the very nature of such social interaction means that students “may be more prone to expressing culturally expected views” (Bryman, 2012: 518), and display a tendency “to produce consensus” (Barbour, 2008: p.143), which whilst problematic to identify or control, at least needs acknowledgement.

There were six key questions focus groups were asked, that went through the following sequence shown in Appendix 8.6.1., which aimed at eliciting both descriptive and explanatory responses. The aim in all of these was to sequentially explore the key focus of the first enquiry sub-question; to seek a description and explanation from students of the way they experienced VHS in a History lesson, both in their perceived positive and negative ways.

### **3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews with teachers and education professionals**

Semi-structured interviews consisting of broad lines of questioning that were both focused on the research questions but not so prescriptive as to preclude potentially useful data, were held with a mainly opportunistic sample of History teachers and education professionals. This study involved lesson observations and interviews with three history teachers from my previous school, and interviews with three education professionals. The choice of school and education professionals was partly for pragmatic reasons, in they are all people I know who work with VHS in some way and may have something to say about it, which in terms of identification and access helped logistically.

Semi-structured interviews were used to establish the terrain teachers and professional educators work in, and their rationale and choices made in terms of both the selection and perceived utility of VHS, and their pedagogical approaches. This aimed to explore some of the value systems and political forces that underpin practice. After this interview, there was an observation of teachers working with young people using VHS. The idea of observing was to help tease out any disparities between what practitioners may say and do, to develop in the post-observation reflective interview stage “authentic as opposed to plausible answers” (Cooper & McIntyre 1996: 36) by encouraging teachers to reflect on their specific practice. I am aware, however, of challenges such as that of trying to ‘observe everything’ and the potential impact of the ‘Hawthorne effect’ (Matthews & Ross 2010: 25), where an awareness of being observed mitigates the behaviour of the subjects being studied.

My rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews are manifold. In the literature on semi-structured interviews, the word “probe” regularly occurs (Sharp, 2009: 80; Bryman, 2012: 478; Gray, 2009: 370; Opie, 2006: 118; and Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995: 157), indicating an exploratory dimension to questioning, presenting an opportunity to help make implicit thinking more explicit. I wanted to glean a deeper understanding of

the processes involved in learning using VHS than a survey might provide, or that a more structured interview might constrain. The potential for flexibility, for diversion “into new pathways” (Gray, 2009: 373) that encompass “issues and matters that might not have been included in a pre-devised schedule” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 147) is valued in this, responding to the constructivist approach I was taking.

Consideration was made of the interviewer-interviewee dynamic during the interview, where “questions about how the researcher and respondent(s) relate to each other are of paramount importance” (Dunne et al, 2005: 32). In part, this reflects an awareness that using this method means to a variable extent “control of the interview is shared” (Sharp, 2009: 74), developing into a dialectical relationship of potentially collaborative analysis, “precariously treading the delicate line between informants’ and researchers’ constructions of the meanings” (Wilson, 2013: 162).

Semi-structured interviews with teachers and education professionals followed an identical format, though teachers also had a shorter, post-observation interview where they were encouraged to reflect on the lesson they had taught, specifically in relation to the use of VHS. This was not used for education professionals, as pragmatically I was unable to observe their practice. The questioning framework adopted was one of a ‘funnelling’ of questions (see Appendix 8.6.2), from the broad to the more specific. This format was adapted from Brinkmann & Kvale’s (2014) outline of a “funnel-shaped interview,” also referred to in Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2011: 143) as the “funnel design” (2015: 156). Their description, though, lacks a development of the actual notion of ‘funnelling.’ The use of the term here is different. Interviewees were told the purpose at the start, and the purpose of each of the questions and how they would be connected. Questions started broadly, and ‘funnelled’ down to the more specific.

There were five key questions teachers and professional educators were asked. The aim in each of these was to sequentially explore the key focus of the first enquiry sub-question; to seek a description and explanation from both groups of the way they perceived their experience of VHS in their specific educational settings. Teachers, in addition, had a short post-lesson interview lasting between ten and fifteen minutes,



where they were asked to reflect on the lesson they had just taught, specifically in the use of VHS. Included in this I used provisional prompts to explore issues further as opportunities presented themselves. This was intended to allow teachers the space to reflect on their practice, and in so-doing, enable this investigation to become more of an iterative process, to help validate or interrogate interpretations and conclusions I as researcher may have tentatively come to.

Methodologically, interviews aimed to achieve the five key elements of responsive reviews that Rubin & Rubin (2012: 105) outline: “depth,” “detail,” “vividness,” “nuance,” and “richness,” by following suggestions such as encouraging nuanced answers “by wording questions to avoid yes-no, either-or responses and then pursuing alternatives mentioned.” Brinkmann & Kvale (2014: 159) also talk about how the question of “why the subjects experience and act as they do is primarily a task for the researcher to evaluate,” so that, using the analogy of a doctor’s surgery, they are providing descriptive accounts rather than self-diagnosis. This approach and analogy seems limited, however. Whilst much of the interviews are designed to be descriptive, asking interviewees to reflect on the ‘why’ aspect of their descriptions can also add a layer of ‘richness’ that Rubin & Rubin call for, I also attempted to elicit some more analytical, reflective responses to build on the descriptive.

### **3.3.3 Lesson Observations**

Lesson observations fitted as the middle part of a three-stage process of teacher-interview, lesson observation, followed by a further teacher interview. These were undertaken as a way of verifying teacher intent, unveiled during the initial interview, and allow a glimpse into the dichotomy between theory and practice, with the inherent common threads and divergences that may result. In reality, these are referred to less than the other data sources in the data analysis section. In part this is because semi-structured interviews with teachers and student focus groups seemed to provide a richer stream of qualitative description and explanation of the lessons, but also because two of the three teachers significantly diverged from the lesson remit they were given, with one using moving image for a central part of the lesson, and the other developing a ‘one-off’ lesson using VHS, rather than integrating the use of VHS

into their normal teaching. Whilst both were interesting moves, they were ultimately tangential to the main focus of this research.

The three lesson observations conducted have followed Wilson's (2013: 109) advice that as "classrooms are very complex social settings and there are many things going on at once... You need to have a clear purpose when you come to observe a classroom." Treading a balance between the superficiality inherent in trying to record everything, and limiting the focus so much that I might see only what I wanted to see, the observations were set up for the core purpose to record what VHS the teacher used, how they were used, and how students responded to their use. The purpose of all three is descriptive, and whereas the recording of teacher actions was passive, the recording of student actions was more active where possible, in the form of directly talking to students about what they were doing and how they understood it where the opportunity arose. Such opportunities often came as teacher-directed talk ended and students engaged in more individual or group tasks. The term "passive participation" occurs in Savin-Baden & Major's (2013: 394) continuum of observation roles, reflecting their thinking that the binary between a researcher being "participant and direct" as opposed to "non-participant" is "problematic"; instead, they prefer, as do I, to "make distinctions about the *levels of participation*" [my italics].

I used a laptop to record notes, kept in the form of a timeline as the lesson progressed, and focused on teacher instructions, explanations and questions, teacher actions, student actions and dialogue (captured verbatim where possible), and other general observations that seemed at the time to be relevant to the use of VHS. I chose this method rather than audio or video recording as it mitigated some of the ethical issues around recording classroom practice and had the pragmatic advantage over audio recording of being able to record patterns of dialogue that specified individual students engaged in, and who would be subsequently anonymised. However, an issue with this approach is that it was a 'one-hit' opportunity, there was "no chance of 'action replay'" (Wilson, 2013: 111), and I needed to be aware of the potential of some effect on class behaviour because of my presence. Lesson observation notes were then used during the subsequent post-observation interview with the teacher to clarify and

verify my recording and inherent interpretation of what happened, to help minimise bias in the recording process.

Whilst teachers were observed, it was decided this wouldn't be replicated for professional educators. This was primarily due to pragmatic reasons; not just the ability to physically get to watch them, but also due to difficulties in obtaining consent from the parents of students from schools I didn't know. It was also felt that whilst it would have been interesting to see them, this wasn't actually crucial to the research itself, as I at least had verbal descriptions of at least one teaching session from each of them anyway.

### **3.4 Different Perspectives**

When Schostak (2006: 5) highlights the importance of questioning the validity of representations of data as being "essential to maintaining an openness to the views of the other," there is a sense that claims to 'knowledge' and 'understanding' will never be complete, that they will always contain caveats and gaps. Whilst acknowledging that such incompleteness is inherent in this investigation, I nevertheless aim to incorporate other voices to gain different perspectives and insights on the data that may not otherwise be appreciated.

Three particular aspects this investigation focuses on to develop different perspectives on the data include triangulation, reflexivity, and the process of a limited form of multiple voicing that, whilst not losing the central single "voice of omniscience" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003: 580) of the researcher, allows other voices to be heard at different stages.

The triangulation of methods approach adopted here is a process which, as Sandelowski (2003: 328) points out, is overused to the point where it is a "'near-talismanic method' for democratising inquiry." In this investigation, triangulation has a dual aspect; there is a triangulation both of methods in terms of lesson observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and also of participants, in terms of students, teachers and education professionals. Yet there is dismissal in Sandelowski's

claim of the inflated worth of triangulation that belies its advantages and neglects why it has been so widely adopted in the first place. The advantage of triangulation, as Mason highlights, is its potential to “encourage the researcher to approach their research questions from different angles, and to explore their intellectual puzzles in a rounded and multi-faceted way” (Mason, 2002: 190). One of the types I planned to use is referred to as “methodological triangulation” that uses “between-method triangulation.” The purpose of this is to aim to produce a process where “cumulatively the weaknesses of one research method are offset by the strengths of the others” (Arksey & Knight, 1999: 23).

One criticism Richardson and St. Pierre (2008: 473) note is that triangulation is too rigid a system in that it “assumes there is a “fixed point” or “object” that can be triangulated”: instead they propose that “we do not triangulate; we crystallize.” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2008: 473). This refracting of experiences through multiple viewpoints and media is beyond this research, though I am aware that even in its own right triangulation is complex and “rarely does it provide a clear path to a singular view of what is the case” (Bazeley, 2013: 406), which in any case is not an epistemological position of this research. However, some see this as of benefit. Triangulation, it is argued, “should be less a matter of convergence in the sense of confirmation of what has already been discovered,” rather, it “is particularly useful for theory-development when it can elucidate divergent perspectives” (Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004: 182). It is this interplay between convergence and divergence that holds promise of a useful paradigm for thinking about the data. An instance of this had occurred during the pilot research project for this study, referred to in the Introduction using the source in Appendix 8.1.1. As some students struggled to make sense of the globe-headed figure in the cartoon, the teacher’s perspective on this added an interesting dimension. When she noticed that some students struggled with interpreting the figure’s face, her response was that “they just weren’t looking properly,” and when she noted that bar two students, none of the others had noted that the globe-headed figure was facing the other way around, her explanation of this was that “they were just not looking at it closely, in detail.” While the apparent frustration of students not “looking properly”

may seem open to critique, it also seemed productive to understand what lay behind this teacher account.

Allowing multiple voices to help triangulate the voice of the researcher infused this investigation in a number of ways. Within the nature of how VHS are experienced, the voices of three different groups (students, teachers and professional educators) are foregrounded. Not only are they voiced, but they are to an extent given autonomy and rights of revision of their voice. Professional educators and teachers, for instance, were all given copies of transcriptions from interviews and allowed to revise their comments at will. Further, the use of the 'many minds' approach (see Data Analysis section) allowed other voices to enter the interpretive process to help decentre my own interpretive responses.

In terms of reflexivity, a key point is that it is what Holliday (2012: 138) sees as a necessary response "to the realisation that researchers and their methods are entangled with the politics of the social world they study," and that this 'entanglement' needs to be accounted for. An awareness of my own position as researcher is important here in the constructivist approach to this investigation, where research is 'constructing,' rather than 'finding' truths, which involves an examination of "the embodied relationships between researchers and researched" and a need to "critically scrutinise acts of writing up the research" (Yates, 2004: 51).

For Drake (2005: 85) "reflexive consideration of the researcher's position," is important in the research process. In this investigation I intend to account for my own role and how it might shape and influence the process of research. I need to be clear about the purpose of my research, and what I was doing it for, whilst acknowledging that Mason (2002: 22) highlights this as often being a fluid, "shifting endeavour." I was aware of how teacher research "brings you, the researcher, clearly into the "frame" of the research as interpreter, expert and theorist," (Costley, Elliot & Gibbs, 2010: 100) and how the role "constitutes an integral part of the findings themselves" (Wilson, 2013: 148). To address this, I aimed to try to identify times when I might exert an influence on the outcome by making reflective notes during, or immediately after the

research, in which I needed to be aware that in the coding process I will have “to wrestle with your participants’ interpretive frames of reference, which may not be your own” (Charmaz, 2014: 159). As a piece of participatory research, Bergold and Thomas (2012: 1) optimistically argue, this represents “an attractive and fruitful knowledge-generating option.”

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The data collection was completed during June and July 2016, and the majority of the data analysis was conducted between July 2016 and June 2017. It should also be noted that although the heading of this section may suggest otherwise, there is an understanding that data analysis and data collection are not two separate entities; they are messy and feed off and inform each other as well.

Each of the data sets (students, teachers and education professionals) were initially analysed separately, and then different themes and patterns were looked for that emerged between them. In doing this, I developed a matrix relating qualitative themes through content analysis and reflections on variables (Cresswell & Clark 2011: 118), to create an epistemological picture to help address my research questions (Appendix 8.7.3). This was not quite so linear, though, as from the start of the research I had already started thinking about the data, a process that continued throughout the writing of this thesis.

For both interviews and focus groups there was an element of referential content analysis to help capture “the complexity of language in the production of meaning” (Franzosi 2004: 127), to better understand the process of how meaning from VHS is constructed. To this end, the emphases, pauses, challenges, assumptions, and shifts in thinking all play a part, and provide a context beyond that which might be read on a surface level. This then combines both a realist approach and a narrative approach to better understand, in describing VHS, how “plausible accounts of the world,” (Silverman 2003: 343) are generated. Transcripts of interviews are therefore accompanied by annotations in the text to capture this.

My use of thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups is intended to add another perspective on the data that may enrich interpretation by identifying the types and prevalence of themes described. Whilst thematic analysis, a “method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” can be “useful and flexible” (Braun & Clark, 2006: 6), there are drawbacks, such as a key weakness being “a failure to actually analyse the data at all” (Braun & Clark, 2006: 26; Gray, 2014: 610-611). They do, however, seem to make a compelling case that this is a pitfall that can be avoided, which I endeavoured to do by mapping and then analysing the data generated from the interviews and focus groups.

The purpose of coding in this thematic analysis was to enable, as Richards (2015: 103) outlines, an ability “to see *across* the data, and *above* the individual documents, to themes and ideas.” It is this ability to group the data and identify emerging patterns that helps generate new ideas, and hopefully ultimately new knowledge. As opposed to coding everything, at the risk of omitting important data, this investigation follows six phases paraphrased by Gray (2014: 609-610) consisting of; familiarising yourself with the data; generate initial codes; search for themes; review themes; define and name these themes; produce the report (which) “must provide sufficient *evidence* of what have been identified as themes within the data.” Themes were identified which had a significant bearing on the overall research question. In line with constructivist grounded theory, this process treads a line between the inductive and the deductive. Although the idea of the inductive, of the themes ‘emerging’ from the data of their own accord, is a core aspect of the coding process, this did not negate a propensity to apply a theoretical framework as the data emerges. The argument here is that the initial inductive approach used as the transcripts were read through was tempered by the on-going application of theoretical frameworks to the data. The process of coding moved quickly from descriptive labels for the data towards a set of ‘analytical categories’ (Hesse-Biber, 2017: 320; Richards, 2015: 112) that moved towards “a broader interpretation of what is going on” (Hesse-Biber, 2017: 320). Appendix 8.7 illustrates how this was done.

Two supplementary methods of data analysis include the adoption of a ‘many minds’ approach, and the practice of ‘free writing.’ The ‘many minds’ approach involved five other doctoral researchers voluntarily reading an anonymised transcript of a passage from a teacher interview individually, annotating the transcript, and then collectively feeding back themes and issues that emerged for them. This was extremely useful in helping to decentre the voice of myself as researcher and interpreter of data, and allow other voices to give other perspectives and insights that I may have missed. It helped to broaden what Sandaña (2016: 8) refers to as the “repertoire of possible lenses, filters and angles to consider and apply to your approaches to qualitative approaches,” and is specifically referred to in Chapter 5.2.1. As a professional involved in history and education, it was useful to garner approaches from other disciplines, such as sociology. Attending a ‘free writing’ workshop at the University of Sussex also allowed me to start to illuminate meanings embedded in transcriptions that I may otherwise have missed. As a result, I created a selection of 5 and 10-minute free writing texts, based on selections from transcripts which enabled me to help make sense of the themes that were emerging from the data. As Webb & Danvers (2016) identify, not only can this aid in starting to identify the gaps between what was heard and what was being said in the transcripts, but can also help in reflecting about what was absent from the data; why some things were mentioned whilst others were not. In my own reflection, immediately after the initial workshop I felt the process “really helps move from describing data to analysing by helping to expose the vulnerability of language in my interviews.”

My own position in the field is as a former teacher of History who currently works in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in History, writing resources and delivering teacher CPD sessions incorporating some visual sources. I am aware that throughout the research process I needed to account for this position, and the impact it might have, especially as some of the research was conducted in a school I used to work in. I also needed to be aware that as a teacher with over twenty years’ experience it would be impossible for me not to have preconceptions, and that I needed to account for this. Whilst there may be a slight blurring of the line between practitioner-insider as opposed to outsider-researcher, it is the latter stance that I aim to ultimately to position myself in.



This includes, but goes beyond, what Snood (2016: 109) refers to as the “positionality” of the researcher to a notion of the potential complexity of the power dynamics of an ex-Head of History observing the teaching of the incumbent Head of History. As an aspect of the complexity of this, the idea of in what ways participants may see the researcher as “powerful” needs the coda that “of course this can happen without the participant realising it as well!” (Matthews & Ross 2010: 76), an idea that refers equally to students as teachers. Ultimately, I knew I needed to try to be aware that I would be seen by different groups of people in different ways, which I intended to acknowledge.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

The issue of ethics in educational research cuts many ways. This research follows in a broad outline the BERA (British Educational Research Association) guidelines that all educational research should uphold an “ethic of respect” for “the person... the knowledge... democratic values... the quality of educational research... (and) academic freedom” (Taber, 2013: 225). The same document goes on to say that researchers often have a responsibility to other wider communities, such as other teachers and parents. With this in mind, this investigation specifically adopts the approach advocated by Palaiologou (2016: 38) which sees ethical considerations as embedded in the entire research process. From this, I have followed four key ethical principles; to “avoid harm to participants, ensure informed consent of participants, respect the privacy of participants,” and to “avoid the use of deception” (Gray, 2009: 73; Bryman, 2012: 135).

For all participants, adherence to the principle of informed consent was key, in recognition of the “essential” requirement that “those involved in your study are willing participants” (Simpson & Tuson, 1997: 57). There are a number of facets to this; for instance, the repeated notion that participation in the study must by necessity be voluntary, emphasising “the rights of participants to withdraw at any time” (Gray, 2009: 86; Simpson & Tuson, 1997: 57; and Taber, 2013: 233), as well as the need to address issues of access to the data once it is collected, and the preservation of the anonymity of respondents, seen as an “essential” component (Hitchcock & Hughes,

1995: 51). In this, as O’Leary (2010: 41-2) outlines, I started with the assumption that “all identifying data remains with the researcher,” which was done through the use of pseudonyms throughout, and by removing secondary references such as the name of the school headteacher and the school itself. There were pragmatic limits to this, though. I explicitly made clear, for instance, at the start of each interview with professional educators, that whilst their responses and identity would be anonymised as best I could, as they each worked in such specific institutions, and described specific educational projects they were involved, I could not guarantee that someone reading their accounts would be unable to trace the institution, and consequently themselves. All three at the time of the interviews said they understood this and that it was not a significant issue for them.

As Taber advocates, permission to participate was sought from all participants. All teachers and education professionals were given both an information sheet explaining about the purpose of the research and their rights within it (Appendix 8.9), as well as a consent form (Appendix 8.8), which was referred to more than once during each of the interviews. Where children were concerned, as well as also being given an information sheet, permission was sought both from the parents and the students themselves to participate, again emphasising their right to withdraw at any time. Permission was also sought and obtained from the head teacher of the school in which much of the research was conducted.

Being both reflective and reflexive throughout the whole the research process involves being “honest, open and critical” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995: 103), and in so doing examining “the underlying assumptions and priorities that shape interaction at a given time, place and situation” (Wilson, 2013: 6). To help, I had already published an on-going Blog that reflected of my research journey, but also kept a more personal diary of specific research activities that I could use to reflect critically on my position as researcher throughout the research process.

## 4. Research participants

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce the key research participants through the use of six pen portraits, to provide some contextual background to their responses in the data, as well as to provide an explanation of the coding used in the data analysis in chapter 5.

### 4.2 Coding

The following coding is used to indicate locations of quotes within the transcripts. Numbers refer to line numbers in the transcript text where references are extracted from.

**Teachers** – E, J and S are the 3 different teachers, anonymised (Emily, Jeff and Simon); 1 is for pre-lesson semi-structured interview, and 2 is for post-lesson semi-structured interview (e.g. J1:33 is Jeff, pre-lesson semi-structured interview, line 33).

**Lesson Observations** - LO is Lesson Observation; and E, J and S refer to the lesson taught by the 3 different teachers (e.g. LOE: 12 is Lesson Observation of Emily, line 12).

**Students** - S is for students; F is for Focus Group; and E, J and S refer to focus groups from the lessons taught by Emily, Jeff and Simon (e.g. SFS: 221-2 is Student Focus Group from Simon's lesson, lines 221-2).

**Education Professionals** - F, R and M refer to interviews with Freya, Ralph and Martha (e.g. F: 50 is Freya, line 50).

### 4.3 Pen portraits

To set some context for the data analysis, a brief 'pen portrait' follows for each of the teachers and professional educators, briefly sketching their background, experience and some of their initial thinking about the teaching of History and the role of visual sources within this.

### 4.3.1 Pen Portraits: Teachers

#### Emily

Emily had worked at the school for just over two terms and was in her NQT year as a teacher of History. Previously she had completed her teaching practice at the school as part of her PGCE year, based in the local university. I was both her mentor during her PGCE, and an Associate Fellow in History ITE at the university, meaning I was involved in her teacher training in a dual role. She grew up in North Carolina in the USA, of white American descent, and had moved to the UK a few years ago. There was a history of her family members also being teachers, and she described her own school experience as one where “I really always enjoyed learning” which was “fun” and “an integral part of your life” (E1: 6-9). In terms of her training, she felt there was “nothing that beats experience” (E1: 28-9), though there seemed a tension between her schooling experience in America and her teacher training in the UK, as expressed in her comment

what I learned from PGCE and like about what they want you to do is there always needs to be active learning, the kids need to be doing something active. I don't know that I necessarily agree with that all the time (E1: 73-5).

She had shown a particular interest in the field of visual learning in History, and had written a short research assignment about it during her PGCE course. Two salient aspects of her focus on teaching History seemed to be how “I like how things are connected, and you can kind of see patterns,” (E1: 95) as well as “how it's still relevant today” (E1: 106). She stressed the important role VHS may play, especially when integrated with written sources in the comment; “I think it makes a greater impact for students” (E1: 143). The lesson she taught was an introduction to the Holocaust with a class of Year 9 students in which she used an intertextual approach, mixing photographs, cartoons, posters and text-based sources in the form of a mini-investigation into stereotyping and antisemitism.

## Jeff

Jeff had worked at the school for about six years and was of white British descent. Originally employed as a teacher of Citizenship and History, at the time of research he taught predominantly History with some A-level Government & Politics. The school was his first post. He described himself as a “maverick” teacher who had his own style that was quite different to the school norm. At university he was inspired to take a teacher training course that combined History and Citizenship, and reflected on how he enjoyed being exposed to what he termed “the science of learning” (J1: 77). During the interview irony was often used, to the point where at times he had to explicitly state he was being ironic, playing with a liminal stance between what he was saying, whether he really believed what he was saying, and whether he thought I believed what he was saying was credible. Describing his motivation to teach, for example, he explained how he wanted to

open people’s minds to the stultifying propaganda that they are fed every day through a dumbed-down mainstream media that just seemed to make complacent robots of everybody (J1: 10-12).

This kind of comment seemed fairly typical of his worldview. There was also a sense of working in a system where “you are constantly being judged by people,” (J1: 183) which he saw as conditioning and mitigating his approach to teaching. His lesson was



Figure 4.1: Front Cover of Private Eye, 17/09/1966, used by Jeff (Appendix 8.1.2)

with a Year 10 GCSE class studying a unit on 'South Africa, 1948-94.' The extended start of the lesson was based on a comparison between two visual sources; the first the front cover of Private Eye Magazine from 1966 showing a satirical visual take on the assassination of Verwoerd (see Fig.4.1). The second was an extract from an episode of 'Spitting Image,' a satirical British puppet show from the 1980s. As this investigation explicitly concerned still rather than moving images, I excluded this from the analysis. Despite being briefed to include still images only, it was not evident why he had included film, but it was interesting that he had.

### **Simon**

Simon was Head of History at the school. In his third year of teaching at the school, he had just been promoted in the year of this research. Of Asian descent, he also trained at the local university like Emily. He saw himself as an 'early starter', where "I think at the first point when I started to think about teaching was actually at the age of five" (S1: 5). His memory of his own schooling was that "it was more knowledge recall, and it was done in a very didactic way" (S1: 19-20). When asked why he chose to teach History in particular, he responded that "it really taps into every subject known to mankind" (S1: 27-8). He also explained that as a result of his PGCE course, "I used to believe that there was something called historical truth, but there isn't such a thing, it's more about historical validation more than anything else" (S1: 37-9), and how

I think the biggest one, because it was brand new was, it was certainly brand new to me... it was the pedagogical aspects of it, knowing that actually there are all these clear skills that we teach, and they have been defined and redefined by governments past since 2000 (S1: 54-7).

He described how he believed "History is such an incredibly visual subject... it allows students to visualise in their head what it is that we're teaching looks like" (S1: 118-9). Although his remit was to teach a 'normal' lesson of a choice which incorporated a visual source or sources of his choice, he decided instead to teach a one-off lesson that took what he called a 'skills' approach to teaching with VHS and incorporated a range of cartoons, from Low's 1934 portrayal of the 'Night of Long Knives' to a contemporary cartoon about Brexit. I wasn't quite sure why he had chosen to do this but, like Jeff, it was interesting that he had done so.

### 4.3.2 Pen portraits: Professional educators

#### Freya

Freya studied Drama and Education at Cambridge before spending about ten years teaching in a large state primary school. She then became a freelance educator after spending some time as part of the Holocaust Education team at the Imperial War Museum. During this time she also worked in different roles at the National Gallery. She described herself as being “very interested in stimulating children’s curiosity, and stimulating children’s wonder, and using visuals as a creative catalyst to enable children to learn” (F: 36-8). She also went on to say “I feel very strongly... (about) using a methodology where it’s constructivist in its approach” (F: 38-9). She described History in personal terms, as integral to identity, especially in light of her Jewish family history, as “it gives me a sense of place, a sense of being. It gives me *roots*” [her emphasis] (F: 77). A particular education project she was ‘project-manager’ for a few years at the National Gallery was called *Take One Picture*, where

every year the National Gallery... the education team chooses one painting which is to act as a creative catalyst to cross-curricula learning across the curriculum, and it culminates in children, erm... (pause) creating work around the particular painting. Um, and then there is an exhibition, an annual exhibition which is actually *in* the National Gallery (F: 2011-14).

#### Ralph

Ralph has held several positions, all related to the visual arts, whilst continuing to be a practising visual artist himself. At the time of the interview he was the Informal Learning and Engagement Manager at the Imperial War Museum. Prior to this he had worked in the film industry as an animator and cartoonist and had also held various positions in the National Gallery, where for a time he worked on the secondary school programme. Unlike the other professional educators, he declared “I don’t have a single qualification, everything was... is based on experience. I left school with absolutely nothing” (R: 58-9). He has been involved in a number of projects that have utilised gallery space to run education sessions based around the visual arts. Examples of these include *Unspeakable – the Artist as Witness to the Holocaust*; bringing a car damaged

from a bomb attack in March 2007 on Mutannabi Street in Baghdad into the Imperial War Museum; making a *Peace Camp* connected to an exhibition of the work of political artist Peter Kennard; and developing a session called *The Nature of the Beast* where “I asked them to look at the large objects (in the museum) and think about them coming to life as creatures. Um, and where in the food chain would they be?” (R: 162-3).

### **Martha**

Martha is the School’s Program Officer at the National Portrait Gallery. Prior to that she was the Schools Officer at the National Gallery. She studied English Literature with European Studies at university, and completed a Master’s degree at the Courtauld Institute of Art in Antique and Byzantine Art. She had experience as an educational tour guide around Europe, teaching History, art and culture, and reflected that she learned a lot from other guides who “were all very skilled at questioning... and encouraging audience members to do the work themselves” (M: 56-7). She described how even in primary school “I just couldn’t engage with text” (M: 22), which she often repeated in the interview as being “boring.” She saw art as “a way of seeing the world” (M: 78) and the role of History as in how “it reflects yourself as much as the time it was in, and it helps you to make understanding of what’s going on in the world today” (M: 119). A key project she has been involved in recently, that she described in some depth in the interview, was *The Face of Britain*, a collaboration with the historian Simon Schama which involved rehanging portraits in the Gallery on thematic lines, reflecting five themes that he had identified; Fame, People, Power, Self and Love.



## 5. Data Analysis

This section contains seven main themes that have emerged from a thematic analysis of the data, each presented in two sections; a description and analysis of the data, followed by a summary of the implications of the data for educator pedagogy.

The data analysis followed a three-step process. Having personally transcribed all the data from interviews, focus groups and lesson observations, the first step was then to place this data into a data analysis coding matrix produced in Microsoft Excel.

Appendix 8.7.1 shows a sample extract from the matrix I produced for Martha, with a similar format being used for all other interviewees and focus groups. Using verbatim quotes, the data for teachers and professional educators was divided into two sections; the first identified salient information that described four lines of questioning in interview, namely interviewees' biographical contexts and experiences, their view on teaching History, their view on teaching History using VHS, and descriptions. There then followed a second section on the grid, coded in light blue, that attempted to thematically code this data into a brief summative statement, such as 'text as "boring",' under five headings; pros of using VHS, cons of using VHS, descriptions of intertextuality, descriptions of teacher pedagogy, and 'other.' These matrices also contain red dotted lines to show how different comments were connected in some way, as well as small green text boxes where I inserted comments or questions that occurred to me as I compiled them.

The second step involved producing simplified composite thematic maps for each of the types of data gathered. Appendix 8.7.2 is an example of an extract from a composite thematic map for the three students focus groups, which are each denoted by a separate colour. The idea here was to draw data together from each group to be able to start to identify dominant themes which seemed to emerge, either in terms of numerical repetition or in terms of relevance to informing the research question.

Finally, Appendix 8.7.3 shows an example of a thematic map developed from the data from which the accounts in this subsequent data analysis section are derived. Seven of these were produced, each focussing on one of the emergent themes from the data.

8.7.3 shows a thematic map for the first of these seven themes, 'Engagement /

Access.’ The aim of all seven of these was to bring together all the data from teacher and professional educator interview, lesson observations and student focus groups, into one place, to identify subthemes and to attain an overall map of how each theme was being described, colour-coded to identify which data set each came from. Each subtheme includes a verbatim quote to illustrate, as well as inserted red text boxes where theory from the literature review section seemed to inform the data, and red dotted lines to illustrate where the data seemed to be paradoxical. Each of these seven thematic maps constituted a starting point for the data description and analysis which follows.

A decision was also taken during the collection of data not to take a more systematic approach in analysing how student responses differed and the ways such differences could be attributable to differences between the students themselves. In part this was a pragmatic decision to delimit this study in light of what without significant depth may result in tenuous connections being made between student backgrounds and responses. Also, this was a reflection of teacher sampling choices for student focus groups that tended to lack a representativeness of class composition in terms of factors such as gender and ethnicity.

## **5.1 Access and Engagement**

### **5.1.1 ‘High impact’? How can access and engagement with VHS be described and understood?**

The term ‘access’ as it applies to the data is understood in several ways: in terms of the perceived ‘ease’ with which VHS are seen to be open and available to interpretation, including the immediacy of the visual, and the way it is seen to constitute a discrete language of its own; the role prior knowledge plays in facilitating or impeding such access; degrees of inclusion or exclusion for specific groups, including notions of democracy; and the sense in which VHS may be seen as threatening or non-threatening. Related yet distinct, the concept of engagement also emerged, especially in the sense in which VHS were seen by students to be relevant in some way, as well as ways in which they were seen to augment learning.

Both teachers and especially students often spoke about the ‘ease’ with which VHS can be understood. Typical comments ran along the lines of “it’s simple to understand” (LOS: 47). Yet there are many nuances within such a conception: as well as it is easier to “think,” comments referred to VHS making it “easier” to “analyse” (SFE: 43); “to understand” (LOS: 47); “to take in the information” (SFE:48); and “to get an understanding” (E1: 290). Such comments signal VHS as being seen both as facilitating the relay of information, as well as helping to make meaning from it. Taking this further, some references to VHS being ‘easier’ are qualified. One teacher, for instance, spoke of how VHS made “it easier to get an understanding of what people thought about apartheid at the time” (J1: 290-1), which indicates an interpretative function. Others, however, refer to the multiple possibilities VHS can open up; “it can help you think a bit easier, looking at it you can see it’s giving answers in different ways” (SFS: 115-6). Implicitly this is signalling one of the inherent properties of VHS as being seen as diverging from the monochrome to the polychromatic, an idea that comes from a student, in terms of the way they can be read compared to text, a theme that emerged later on as well in reference to the properties of VHS. It was also interesting that the majority of such comments came from students, but none of the professional educators referred to VHS as in any sense ‘easier’ to work with, indicating a divergence of perception. In support, the literature seems to echo the idea of visual sources being more straightforward from a teacher’s perspective. The reflection of a teacher on his pedagogical approach presented in a ‘guided reader’ to teaching History declares that when developing inference skills at KS3, “this process must begin with a visual image. Students find the concept of inference much more straightforward when applying it to pictures” (Moore, 2014: 123).

Paradoxically, though, there were a number voices which indicated how difficult working with VHS could be. When asked about any potential problems Emily could see in using VHS connected with teaching about the Holocaust, the response “maybe they don’t get the image, or don’t understand what I’m showing them” was echoed by other teachers. Jeff reflected on his choice of using a Private Eye front cover (Appendix 8.2.4) as being “a bit too sophisticated for some of them,” (J2: 4-5) and how it “might have been a bit too complicated” (J2: 23). To some extent, whilst disentangling the

visual aspect of the source with its historical content and context is problematic, the visual media being an inherent aspect of the source seems to problematize the notion of 'ease.'

In an effort to resolve such an apparent paradox, some writers identify an inherent duality within VHS, in what has been described, in the specific context of political cartoons, as "their simplicity-in-complexity" (Minear, 2013: 265). Whilst this is an interesting concept, it hints at rather than explains a resolution to this paradox. The research data in this investigation points to another way of looking at the problem: the issue of context. Students from Jeff's lesson afterwards spoke of how, "if it was something to do with apartheid, I would have to know at least something about it to really know what's going on" (SFJ: 73-4). This was echoed in other lessons. A student from Simon's lesson, for instance, who was working with a range of political cartoons, commented that "If I didn't know anything about the topic, or what the cartoon was about, then I probably wouldn't understand it." (SFS: 47-8) At this point, perceptions of the need for context and the role of prior knowledge in working with VHS start to appear confused and at times contradictory. Maybe this has something to do with the different contexts in which practitioners work, yet there is a sense that conceptions of such practice go beyond the classroom and are maybe more generalizable. Emily, for instance, spoke of how "lots of times kids *do* need background knowledge, to help to kind of unpick the message of the cartoon" (E1: 255). Going further, in talking about using contemporary illustrations of the English Civil War, a lack of prior knowledge can appear obstructive. Again, Emily talked of

where it works quite negatively would be, um, when we've done the English Civil War, and a lot of the stuff we present them with in terms of visual stuff is more the, the pamphlet illustrations that used to go out, the (sic) kind of went for antiroyalist or anti-parliamentarian, and all they're seeing is just a very badly drawn cartoon (TA1: 202-5).

But not everyone interviewed echoed this demand or call for prior knowledge. When looking at visual objects in museums, Ralph said the opposite; "you don't need prior knowledge about what the object is, you don't need context" (R: 191-2). Partly this apparent paradox can be resolved in an appreciation of the different contexts in which practitioners work in. Whereas teachers used specific political cartoons connected

with teaching about the Holocaust or apartheid in South Africa being taught as part of a KS3 and KS4 curriculum respectively, Ralph spoke about a specific schools' project called '*The Nature of the Beast*' where students creatively engaged with material visual objects in the museum. In the latter case, the historical content was more emergent and incidental to the activity, one where "if in that time somebody reads the label and says – oh, this was the gun that was used at El Alamein – what's El Alamein? Yeh? – and then the conversation goes on" (R: 194-5). Yet while contextually these are quite different, it would be remiss to neglect the comparative possibilities of each pedagogical approach and how they might interrelate. Within this, the assumption that the pre-knowledge of students may be helpful in constructing meaning from VHS needs to be interrogated. The idea that "pupils bring to the contemplation of... images a mixture of random knowledge and total, sometimes astonishing, ignorance," (Card, 2008: 70) reminds us that students' pre-knowledge needs to be unpacked and exposed rather than inherently and almost pejoratively being seen to be beneficial.

A further paradoxical aspect of the duality between VHS as being '*easy-difficult*' is the sense in which they are seen as '*immediate-distant*.' The immediacy of how VHS are experienced is apparent in a number of different comments. Professional educators spoke of the term "immediate" (R: 453), of how "often, I find that children can instantly access or understand something of it," (F: 100-1) and how VHS offer "a quick way into it" (F:69) and that "it's a really immediate form of engagement" (R: 194). Interestingly, such views come solely from professional educators, and mirror some of the theoretical positions on such immediacy. Schama (2015: 367), for instance, compares the "instantaneous quality of its (painting's) communication.... (which) pours ideas into our minds; words can only drop them, little by little," a perception also developed in the idea that "pictures introduce viewers directly to aspects of the past, while words help them stand back from immediate impression" (Howells & Matson, 2009: 120). Both contrast visual immediacy, an "a-temporality" (Steiner, 1985: 57) that professional educators refer to, with a sense of temporal revealing and the inviting of reflection that words provide.

Yet a perception of the need for persistence with VHS to unravel their meaning seems to contradict this immediacy. Ralph, who spoke of VHS as 'immediate' later disputed

this notion, saying “it’s very, very rare that you see any piece of work that communicates itself to you instantly” (R: 459). The tension between these two positions seems puzzling at first. One way in which Simon tried to resolve this was by seeing the pull between the two properties pedagogically and in terms of opportunity. “So then,” he said, “we then help the students to move beyond the complexities of not taking a photograph at face value” (S1: 133-4), which hints at Burke’s (2001: 83) observation of the duality, the ‘simplicity-in-complexity’ of images, of how “images... communicate quickly and clearly the details of a complex process.” Just how quickly such complexity is grasped, however, is not always apparent. Indeed, from one student’s point of view, unpicking complexity in a photograph of Jewish students in a school in Czechoslovakia in 1942 is certainly a process that requires work and effort; “It wasn’t as fun as it... we wouldn’t have to think about it, just pick out the quotes from the text, instead of actually thinking about it and engaging with it” (SFE: 30-1). Whatever ‘fun’ is, it is interesting that this student saw the process of investing time in analysing VHS as an engaging one: complexity can be seen to be motivational.

A further strand in this notion of VHS being ‘easier’ than text to work with is that of the seeming inclusivity they allowed, opening a space for a variety of learners to access History. Whilst this quality was predominantly identified by professional educators, this was not exclusively so. One professional educator spoke about how art “can be read by everybody” (R: 93), and of how it is “accessible in terms of everyone can start” (R: 293-4). Another spoke of how the use of VHS is “about appealing to different learning styles” (PEA: 92) and how it really helped and engaged one particular student “who felt he never fitted in” (F: 422-3). From a student perspective, the use of VHS also seemed to speak to those with specific learning needs. One commented that

I’m dyslexic, so I have trouble reading and writing, but when I look at a picture, I feel I can connect with it more, because it isn’t just words, just like pointless words (SFJ: 65-6).

In another sense, Ralph spoke of when

thinking of your audience... classrooms today, you have a migrant community, all sorts of special needs etcetera... people with another language... you’ve created a level playing field where everyone can read an image (R: 245-8).

To temper this, though, the assumption that images are somehow ‘easier,’ and so especially apposite for students with specific learning needs, was not necessarily born out anywhere else in the data. Further, the notion that ‘everyone can read an image’ is contestable as there seems to be an underlying assumption that there is a common visual language, rather than visual languages or literacies. This will be examined in the following chapter ‘Acts of Seeing.’

What was further apparent, however, was a sense of VHS as having a democratic quality in the form of an openness of participation and articulation. Ralph saw this as emancipating a latent ability that an audience has to participate, in saying that “with art we’re allowing people to have a voice... and a response that they may not be aware they had” (R: 319-20). In a similar sense Simon spoke of how “everyone has something to offer, which is probably the most engaging way that visuals really allow people to really contribute to lessons” (S2: 174-5). This clearly has pedagogical implications, which will be explored in the chapter on ‘Pedagogy,’ suffice it to say that this quality was seen as having a positive impact on the learning experience of students, and one which, in combination with other factors, impacted positively on students behaviour. Freya, for instance, described how

If I give you an example that often when teachers bring children to the National Gallery to look at a painting, they’ll say ‘I can’t believe how well Henry engaged with that painting, and concentrated and spoke so positively about it, because in the classroom, he might fidget or is a student who’s... sometimes is known for having ‘so-called behavioural difficulties’ (F: 92-6).

Whilst the context of learning outside the classroom may have had an impact here, it is interesting that students themselves echoed this observation when contrasting the use of VHS to text in History lessons. One, for instance, described how “I think the class would mess around more if there was lots of writing or lots of text to read, because everyone would either be done too quickly, or get bored really easily” (SFE: 34-5).

The notion of the visual as operating as a ‘language’ is also seen in contrasting ways that seem to play out confusingly. On the one hand is “the fact that the painting has

unlocked or given him a language which he can... that he can access,” (F: 96-8) which seems beneficial, yet later in the same interview a view emerges where “perhaps they don’t have the lexicon, the language to actually create a framework to understand what it is” (F: 151-2). Although this is not clear from the interview, perhaps this depends contextually in the students themselves and the learning situation they are engaged in. In notions of such a language as being able to ‘unlock’ meaning, though, it is also seen in terms of access as being non-threatening. But even here the nuance of language plays out in slightly different ways. Simon, for example, spoke both of how “visuals *are* non-threatening to students,” (S2: 120-1) yet earlier in the interview described how “cartoons and visual images *should be* non-threatening and that people have a capacity to answer” [my italics] (E2: 32-3). This discrepancy between being and the potential to be seems to reveal an uncertainty about whether such a property is inherent in how VHS are experienced.

Related yet distinct to the concept of access is that of engagement. It is notable that all of the comments specifically relating to forms of engagement were positive, from teachers, students and professional educators. Jeff, for instance, spoke of VHS as being of “higher impact” (J1: 154) than text. Developing this point, he elaborated with phrases such as “striking images and pictures” (J1: 175), of how they are “eye-catching, essentially” and how they “bring it (History) to life, first of all” (J1: 133). Two student focus groups mentioned colour as being an important aspect of this visuality. One comment, for instance, reflected on Emily’s lesson and how

it was quite a colourful lesson, whereas text is just black, white, dull, whereas when we’re using images is (sic) mostly vibrant colours, so that you can actually remember it (SFE: 199-200).

Coupled with this sense of being colourful is the relation this has to memory and the imprint it left in this student’s mind. A further way in which this ‘striking’ quality of the visual plays out is revealed in the comment that “They’re (VHS) more interesting and they grab your attention because you’ve got everyone on there” (SFJ: 66-7). This ability of the visual to portray things more holistically in a spatial sense rather than as linear text is interesting, and will also be explored further in the following section ‘Acts of Seeing.’



Engagement is also seen to be fostered by a perception of relevance, an understanding of how the past informs and interacts with the present. Both teachers and professional educators referred to this on a number of occasions. Reflecting on his lesson, Simon spoke of how “I thought I might choose something that was more relatable to things they may have heard about in today’s context... so using something about Brexit” (S2: 6-7). This seemed to be following through in practice his thinking that was articulated before the lesson, about how “I think it’s more an understanding that they’re more connected to stuff that’s more recently happened” (E1: 216-7). There also seems to be a connection here between current issues being more relatable and hence understandable in terms of an assumption that students are more likely to already have contextual knowledge. Jeff seemed to implicitly support this in talking about how he liked to reinforce links between the past and present; “today... up comes UKIPs latest poster... surprisingly, not too dissimilar to Nazi propaganda” (J1: 206-7). Not only teachers but professional educators alluded to this, of how “we had some Gillray (c18th satirical cartoonist) satire out, which of course has complete relevance for today” (M: 324). Freya spoke of how this was taken a step further, translating relevance in what in the Pedagogy section is termed an ‘authentic experience,’ in terms of “being a bridge to a personally meaningful world” (Bonnett & Cuypers, 2009: 331). She described an activity run in the National Gallery where the students

took the composition of all the people in the *Bathers at Asnieres* (a painting by Seurat) and they transposed them into the contemporary landscape of Barnsley – and they called it *Barnsley at Asnieres* (F: 315-6).

Finally, engagement seemed to augment the learning process in perhaps predictable but also unexpected ways. Reflecting on her lesson, Emily spoke on more than one occasion of the positive attitudes she perceived students as having using VHS. One student, for instance, she saw “was kind of reinforcing the idea that visual sources, and photographs in particular, help her to understand what she’s learning” (E2: 22-3). Whilst this may seem in keeping with other findings from the data, what was interesting was how some students at times saw the difficult challenge VHS presented as engaging. One comment, for instance, referred to the ambiguity and opaqueness of VHS as a positive attraction; “It can engage you because a picture, especially with the satirical cartoons and political ones, they’re not always really explicit about what they

mean” (SFS: 121-2). This engagement contrasted starkly with numerous comments peppered throughout the data that privileged the visual over text. Jeff articulated most strongly what others felt when he spoke of how “walls of text, ok, turn people off” (J1: 175) and made a link, however much this may be contested, between chronological age and levels of engagement

the teaching of History can be very difficult, because as you notice what happens, when they get into Sixth Form, they’re suddenly given this huge wall of text... there’s groans and sighs... they don’t want to go through with it (J1: 176-7).

By extension and implication, VHS work in an opposite direction in terms of engagement. Quite how this might be differentiated, in terms of educators and educated, was not so apparent from the data.

## **5.2 ‘Acts of Seeing’**

### **5.2.1 ‘*A picture tells a thousand words*’? How do students “see” VHS?**

The term ‘acts of seeing’ is here intended as a shorthand for the performance of viewing VHS in an educational context. A key premise of this section comes from Rose (2001: 11-12), who identifies how “what is important about images is not simply the image itself, but how it is seen by particular spectators who look in particular ways.” Whilst some comments from interviews refer specifically to the teaching of History, the relationship between VHS and the teaching of History as a discrete discipline will be discussed in the chapter on ‘Historical Interpretation.’ In this section, understandings of ‘acts of seeing’ will be described and analysed in terms of their ability to trigger visualising and imagination; the barriers to seeing, described both in age-related and ethical terms; the commonly held view of the ‘universality’ of the visual as ‘a language’; the contrast between viewing VHS, which reveals itself holistically in a spatial sense, as opposed to text, which is read in a more linear fashion; the call for a need for time to look, within the time-pressures of a constricting curriculum; and the affective domain of looking, in terms of how it often creates personal, emotive responses.

A prevalent theme around acts of seeing from the data is one of the ability to visualise, to create pictures in the mind of the past, and the role imagination plays in this. Comments from teachers and professional educators emphasise this, of how “it allows students to visualise in their head what is it that we’re teaching looks like” (S1: 118-9). A little more nuance is given to this understanding in comments relating more specifically Emily’s use of a photograph in her lesson of children playing with banknotes in early 1920s Germany (see Figure 5.1). What is interesting is that her



Figure 5.1: Photograph of children playing with banknotes in early 1930s Germany, used by Emily (see Appendix 8.2.3)

comments reveal that visualisation can take different forms; both of specific phenomenon and situations, but also allowing conceptual visualisation. The observation that “because you can just see something, you can just see how that person was living,” (E1: 134-5) alludes to developing a visual understanding of specific social conditions in a specific historical situation. However, in describing how students saw how the children in the photograph were playing with the banknotes as building blocks she describes how her students could “see how worthless money was” (E1: 137), and how “the photograph... I think it kind of makes the concepts kind of sink in their mind” (E1: 139-40). Not only is this interesting in how it plays on the discrepancy between knowledge and understanding in the teaching of History, and how conceptual

frameworks are developed, but also what the term ‘sink in their mind’ implies, which seems ambiguous.

Related to this process of visualisation is the way imagination operates. There were many references to the idea of imagination in the data, with different emphases and perspectives. Some comments, for example, referred to how a visual source “really helps them to imagine what it was *actually like*” [my italics] (F: 155). Such an idea sets up a tension between how imagination is understood as revealing reality, of how images allow us to ‘imagine’ the past more vividly, and how this vividness plays in the space between ideas of reality and more fictional spaces. Comments from teachers and students spoke of a process of reacting to VHS “which does let your imagination run wild” (S1: 123-4); “it kind of makes your imagination run with it a bit” (SFJ: 179); and how “what they were doing really fuelled their imagination” (F: 183-4). This sense of imagination as an almost untameable, unpredictable force has interesting implications for the History classroom, especially in the context of teaching historical empathy. In a broad sense, some theorists understand this imaginative performance as having a latent agency, where

our imagination may be the most revolutionary tool available to us, and yet we have failed to understand its political importance and recognise it as a powerful tool of social force (Desai, Hamlin & Mattson, 2010: xiv).

The distinction between rational argument and imagination is played out in the notion of how, in a discussion on the role of art in History, “what makes people act is not just through a series of arguments, but from a form of imagination” (IHR: 2016), which seemed evident in the practice of all professional educators, but not in school contexts.

The research data also how this apparent benefit of visualisation is mitigated by other factors. One is an understanding some teachers demonstrated of a Piagetian sense of how an ability to understand images is related to age. Beliefs such as “you tend to take things less at face value the older you get, because your critical faculties develop better” (S2: 100-1) and “the older you get, yeh, you are a little more critical, and you

understand things at a deeper level” (E1: 284-5) permeate teacher accounts. Simon explicitly connected his developmental understanding to the experience of using VHS, in talking about “a stage of development when they’re going to be more attracted to that kind of, to that way of taking information than a big wall of text” (S1:155-6). How such a stage functions, in relation to other stages of cognitive development, is unclear though, as is how well it withstands criticism of Piaget’s model. Yet this is not necessarily the point. The issue is that this represents a way teachers have of understanding the experience of working with VHS, and the pedagogical implications this may have.

Another filter through which acts of seeing are seen which emerged is that of ethics. As an interviewer, it was striking that when asked about what issues or problems teachers foresaw with working with VHS in the classroom, the teachers at first tended to talk about ethical issues, and only further probing generated any other responses. In using images to teach about the Holocaust, Emily was aware of two key issues; upset and desensitisation. In the former, in teaching about the Holocaust, she reflected; “I’ve been mindful what images am I showing? A lot of them are quite difficult to look at... I don’t want to cause anyone to be upset” (E1: 185-8). Some of the sources Emily used were photographs, which some writers have specifically recognised as a medium that “raises... ethical issues” (Jordanova, 2012: 145). It was revealing that in a ‘many minds’ analysis of a passage of Emily’s pre-lesson interview (E1: 185-210), one of my peers identified in the passage what they saw as “the values of the teacher,” which were that she was “respectful of people,” “Holocaust victims,” and “children themselves.” In a sense, this reading seemed to reflect feminist education theorist Nodding’s (2012: 231) notion of an “ethic of care” and “calls for respect of the other as other.” Jeff also showed a clear awareness of such issues, when he stated that “anything too gruesome I have to think twice about before I do it” (J1:195). Yet there is a caveat which shows some appreciation of the dilemma that images can pose when he said

I use the word maverick in my approach that thinks – well I don’t care how disturbing this is, I’m going to use it anyway because it’s history and I’m not lying to people. I’d rather people know the truth – I’m not going to pretty

things up or cover it up... But at the same time you have to, you have to think, well some stuff, is that going too far? (J1: 196-200)

What is 'too far' has clear ethical implications for the classroom, concerned as it is of what has been termed "the ethics of seeing" with the tenet that "to photograph people is to violate them" (Sontag, 1979: 1). This may seem doubly so in teaching about the Holocaust, yet the statement neglects ways in which photography can also liberate by telling powerful stories otherwise unheard about those who lack a voice.

A common trope that came through in interviews, especially with professional educators, is that of the 'universality' of the visual as a language that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries. The belief that "if you think about English speakers of other languages, by showing the visual, you get a commonality between children... because they can interpret" (F: 101-3), and where "the universality of art spoke... and crossed all language barriers" (M: 90) seems prevalent, however much the concept itself may be questioned. Martha spoke about a recent experience of working with children in Moscow, where

what I found that I was really struck by was just the language of the art spoke to them in exactly the way it does to the way we train teachers today or children today, they got all the messaging (M: 105-7).

The tension between this concept and some of the theory around non-visual language is palpable. "Theoretically, visual imagery is universal," claim some (Goldin, 1970: 61): "there is no such thing as a universal language," counter others (Dhillon & Halstead, 2009: 156) who instead reframe the concept in a way of thinking about how "there are diverse *languages*... neither unchanging nor unaffected by each other." In support, Mitchell (1986: 90) argues that the notion of an image being a "natural sign" is "the fetish or idol of Western culture." Although we should be wary of drawing too strong a comparison between visual and textual languages, there are similarities where theory can apply in comparable ways. It makes sense to see a diverse field of visual, just as textual, languages, informed as each are by the cultures in which they inhabit. Yet the

experience of professional educators seems otherwise, gravitating as it does towards a more unified concept of a visual language.

A particular aspect of how VHS are viewed concern their ability to provide a more holistic and spatially disparate form of knowledge than text, which needs to be 'read' in a different way. All three groups - students, teachers and education professionals – make some reference to this capacity. Spatially, VHS are seen to have an openness that contrasts to a text, where "words, you're stuck to certain guidelines" (SFJ: 67-8), in contrast to visual media, where "artists can challenge linear narratives of the past" (Desai, Hamlin & Mattson, 2010: 49). This has implications for how VHS are viewed. When one student talked about how VHS "grab your attention because you've got everyone on there," there is a sense of how seeing the 'whole' where the constituent parts of an image are not only separate but relational, informing each other and altering the way the other is seen. Mitchell (2005: 2) interrogates this notion. His main premise in writing about images, he claims, "is to demonstrate that images are not everything, but at the same time to show how they manage to convince us they are." Certainly many students seemed convinced. Uglow (2011: 2) refers to this when she talks of how "we see the whole world but then look at the parts, putting them together in a different way." There is a connection here between Uglow's sense of 'the whole world' and Heidegger's (1977: 130) 'world picture' which he saw not as "a picture of the world but as the world conceived and grasped as a picture," as an aspect of modernity. Jeff offers a slightly different take on how VHS convey information holistically; the ability to "get that information across *succinctly*," [his emphasis] (J1: 294), and how a picture "sums up, sums up totally attitudes within South Africa (pause)... brilliantly" (J1: 281-2).

This quality of VHS to act as a visual, symbolic shorthand plays out through a cliché that recurs in different interviews, that of "a picture speaks a thousand words" (J1: 289-90; F: 99-100). Yet this cliché seems to be accepted uncritically. Whilst it acknowledges a powerful agency that images may have, it seems to neglect that words and images are relational in both directions: if pictures appear as a visual précis of text, text can also conjure multiple, fluid visual mental images. There is a problem also with

another form of cliché used in interviews, that “every picture tells a story” (F: 167-8). As Burke (2001: 144) identifies, “there is a problem of representing a dynamic sequence as a static scene... a problem also of identifying the narrative convention (discourse)” such as how a story is told from left to right, or vice versa. Yet this does not seem to acknowledge the creative plasticity of VHS; the visual conventions that can relay a chronological historical narrative, such as the portrayal of multiple events in a single image. Indeed, in *Narrative Art*, a range of forms, from comic strips to narrative forms from ancient Egypt (Hess & Ashbery, 1970), shows the creative potential the visual has for responding to the ‘narrative challenge.’

Teachers and professional educators also refer to the tension between the time needed to properly look at VHS, where “the longer you look, the more you see,” (Kammen, 2009: loc3238; Morris, 1989: 9), and how Brooks, Arris and Perry (1993: 115) identify “one of the tests of the success of... training in ‘picture reading’ will be that pupils will gradually spend more and more time looking at the picture, and ‘reading’ it at various levels.” However, this needs to be set within the contrasting context of what has been referred to as “the attention economy” (Mirzoeff, 2009: 8) where “the average amount of time visitors spend on one painting (in the National Gallery) is about twenty seconds” (R: 409). In the data there are numerous references of the need for deeper, longer looking. Ralph refers to what he terms “close looking,” (R: 165) which has implications: “the more time you spend, the more you get different responses” (R: 476-7). This mirrors theoretical calls for the need for art to be “thought through” (Perkins, 2006: 3). Reflecting on his lesson, Jeff agreed; “I would probably have got them to discuss it a little bit more... maybe give them some time to maybe think about what their answers were rather than just putting them on the spot... probably allowed them time to dissect it” (J2: 105-7). One means of slowing down looking and making it more purposeful is the concept of an “internal dialogue” which Ralph spoke of in how he did “encourage that internal dialogue... because what you are thinking as you are looking is part of the function of the painting” (R: 411-12). However, this seems to contradict what Willingham (2009: 151) refers to in his description of ‘cognitive styles’ as a ‘visualiser/verbaliser’ paradigm, as a “preference for visual imagery versus preference to talking to oneself when solving problems.” Jeff



seemed to be seeing them as complementary rather than opposites, but perhaps this can be explained by Willingham's (2009: 158) own assertion in discrediting cognitive styles theory that "the best you can say about them is that the evidence is mixed."

Such calls for 'close looking,' 'thinking through' and 'internal dialogues' need to be set in school contexts. Emily referred to how "we don't have a lot of curriculum time any more to go through lots of in depth stuff," (E1: 210-12), revealing an apparent localised pressure to cover the History National Curriculum. But there is also a broader picture. When Card (2008: 38) refers to how pupils need "to scrutinise, to linger over details and reflect on what they see" and be "trained to observe," she sets this in a context where she sees much of the visual world as "fleeting and ephemeral."

A final perspective on 'acts of seeing' alluded to is that around the affective. Affect, in this case, is understood as being "a person's immediate, psychological response to a stimulus" (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2015: 132); in this instance, the stimulus being VHS. Again, all three groups – teachers, students, and professional educators - referred to this in some form, which perhaps indicates a prevalence and significance. A clear distinction was made in some interviews between intellectual and emotional responses

are paintings or art pieces intellectual property? Yes. But they're also an emotional property... (where) responding to your emotional dialogue can be much more challenging than the intellectual (R: 460-1).

This emotional quality intersects with claims to 'authenticity,' referred to later in the chapter on Pedagogy, when Ralph goes on to explain how;

In searching for an answer... you know, why is the Madonna blue? Yuh? I can tell you that. Why does this painting make me feel sad? Well, actually, if you think about it, *you* (his emphasis) can tell me that, because that's your response to this picture. (R: 462-4)

This awareness seems to strongly echo the work of Desai, Hamilton & Mattson (2010: 49) when they note that "art educators often tell students viewing a piece of art is also

a physical and emotional process – that it does not only occur in the thinking brain,” and, further, that “an embodied way of knowledge, embodying the feelings, emotions, and experiences of an idea or event, is crucial to learning about History and art.” Others interviewed referred to this quality, but in a more circumspect, oblique manner.

A common frame of reference used by teachers was that of identification and personalisation. Emily, for instance, spoke of how she wanted students to work “with a photograph to make it more personal,” stressing “it’s the personal side of images” (E1: 225 & 229) that were important. In the more specific context of planning for her lesson, she explained how in teaching about “the Holocaust... start out with an image of a man – so I want to make it very kind of more personal” (E1: 219-20). This was taken further by Ralph, who spoke about how “it could be about a personal experience relating to a particular picture... because it’s *their* experience” [his emphasis] (R: 515-7). A slightly different take on this was given by some of the students when they spoke in terms of identification, and how pictures and text work differently in this. One stated how “I don’t think it would be engaging with just the text, because also you wouldn’t be able to see their faces” (SFE: 33-4), and how “it’s easier to identify with someone from a photograph than it is a piece of text” (SFE: 70). This notion of identification can play out in different ways. The idea that, “the images which we surround ourselves by must be part of our identity... about constructing yourself in a picture or a collection of pictures - an act of ‘self-representation’” (Goldhill, 2016) is at times explicitly alluded to in the choices teachers made about the sorts of images they chose to work with. Jeff even went so far as to say that his choice of a World War Two propaganda poster, ‘Don’t be a Sucker, Keep Your Mouth Shut,’ “plays into the persona I have as a teacher” (J1: 166). This construction of self-identity is clearly a relational one. The idea that “we are always looking at the relationship between things and ourselves” (Berger, 1972: 1) suggests a fluid process of continual invention and reimagining of the self as contexts change.

### 5.3 How images ‘work’

#### 5.3.1 *‘It’s like learning to say A, B, C’?* How is the way images ‘work’ described?

As well as how we see images, the actual properties that were seen to be specifically inherent in different ways in different visual media were often mentioned. Properties of the images themselves and the way they are seen are not always easy to disentangle, the use and understanding of symbolism being an example. Yet, there were numerous assumed and explicit visual functional properties that were spoken of. This section specifically focuses on a comment made by a member of the audience after I presented an early version of this research at the 3<sup>rd</sup> ISA Forum of Sociology in Vienna in 2016; “we ask how they (images) work, not what they mean... it’s really about how they’re working.” This sense of ‘working’ has a pragmatic aspect, in the sense that Peirce intended through his observation that “the significance of something... lies only in the practical effects resulting from its use or application” (Danesi & Perron, 1999: 49). In this section, a key paradigm that will be explored is that between perceptions of VHS as being reflective and enactive. How VHS reflects society or shows opinions will be counterposed by discussion of how images have agency and are historical in and of themselves, in the sense that may be seen not only to be “an active producer of the viewer’s experience” (D’Alleva, 2016: 36) but also as “ways of worldmaking” (Goodman, 1978: 7), rather than as a mirror of the world. Another aspect that was frequently spoken of by a wide variety of interviewees was the symbolic properties of VHS, and issues of iconographical interpretations related to this. Connected to this was a conception, particularly amongst professional educators, that VHS have the properties of language, an idea which needs interrogation. In broad terms, teachers especially spoke of the ‘life skills’ that the reasoning behind working with VHS could prepare students for in looking beyond school. Finally, the acknowledgement, or lack of, of a differentiated conception of different media types and the distinctions between them was also talked of, though much of this was undeveloped and vague.

The relationship between reflecting and enacting is more complex than the binary may suggest. Some comments remark on the reflective aspect of VHS, as a mirror of society. Jeff, reflecting on his lesson, spoke about the images he used, declaring “what they’re actually a reflection of is British attitudes towards apartheid,” (J2: 136-7), which supports the notions of some theorists that “ultimately, it (art) offers a window on society’s values and ideals” (Hodge, 2014: 6), and how it offers “an index of society” (Gombrich, 1999: 267). Yet there is a sense that images can hold positions of reflection and agency simultaneously, that they possess a summative-formative duality. This tension between the two positions emerged in a comment from Martha, who spoke of how

Art is a sign, it’s like a symbol of what’s happening. So it’s not a by-product of it... it is a way of seeing the world... it’s a barometer of what’s going on... it *is* reality (M: 73-9).

The idea of art as being ‘symbolic of...’ and ‘not a by-product of...’ indicates some form of agency. There seems to be a conflation of ideas, however, between being both a ‘barometer’ and being ‘reality.’ The extent to which an image is ‘a mark of’ or ‘a mark itself’ seems ambiguous, and it is unclear from the statement whether these two properties are coexistent and complementary, or distinctly separate. This ambiguity is reflected in the language of theorists. Morris’s observation, for example, that cartoonists are popular as their work can “often indicate how the artist was crystallising something generally felt” (Morris, 1989: 15) reflects this. The nuance between the verbs ‘reflect’ and ‘crystallise’ seems slight, yet arguably significant. In a related way, in Kant’s (2016) view that “both history and the arts are part of the ideological natures of the country,” the term ‘nature’ hints at less of a reflective capacity and more the property of being an historical agent in its own right.

Amongst all of the professional educators there was explicit acknowledgement and discussion of the agency of art, but not amongst any of the teachers or students, perhaps constrained by a curriculum which points to visual illustration rather than VHS being taught in terms of its agency. The education programme of the National Portrait

Gallery consciously seemed to be working with students on the agency of its collection, especially in the light of its *'The Face of Britain'* exhibition. Martha saw this as being media-specific in comments such as "it's an agency of portraiture in particular" (M: 361-2). In four separate comments she spoke of how portraits they used with students had "shaped history," and had been specifically selected for possessing that property.

Key portraits, like the Darnley portrait of Elizabeth I... of Holbein's cartoon of Henry VIII, and they are...they have shaped history, and made power by posing for an image of themselves" (M: 201-3).

This idea of power being performative, of being bodily enacted, and the ideological pursuits within which this occurs has been written about by Burke (2001: 13), who identifies the interplay in how; "what portraits record is not social reality but social illusions – not ordinary life but special performances." Martha also spoke about Schama's collaboration with the gallery in producing the exhibition, and his influence in promoting the idea of "the role of visual language in shaping history, not just a window onto it, but it actually makes history" (M: 349-50). This quality of agency is seen by others to have transformative qualities. Freya's description of her *Barnsley at Asnieres* project spoke about how "it created many sorts of transformative changes" (F: 348-9), which extended beyond the school boundaries; "I believe that it not only transforms school children, it transforms school communities" (F: 371-2). In terms of pupils, she found it "a really inspiring story about how young people, who didn't feel necessarily that they fitted into... mainstream of the school found their place" (F: 427-8). This sense of transformation has a performative quality linking past and present. In making banners of 'Barnsley at Asnieres' that were informed by the "banners that they used to carry, proudly, from the mines" (F: 327) at the time of the miner's strike in the 1980s, the agency and symbolic power of association of art was then visibly enacted in the streets, in a public space, as the school community paraded through the town with their banners. A final aspect of agency referred to was the way historically works of art have been seen as threatening, and hence relevant and powerful. "What is it that makes people attack a picture?... why attack art if it's irrelevant?" Martha rhetorically asked (M: 357). In their historical context,

why do works of art get stolen, transported, get banned from certain countries, like Guernica not allowed back in Franco's Spain... or why would Suffragettes wanna attack paintings? (M: 358-61)

In this sense it seems that the thinking that "works of art are agents of time - do not necessarily reflect" (Kant, 2016), and "pictures never illustrate... they're always part of making history" (Goldhill, 2016) have some validity at least in the world of professional educators. Why this is not grasped in school contexts is moot and speculative, but there is a clear disconnect here between practice in galleries and practice in school contexts.

The role symbolism plays as a property of VHS was discussed by a number of teachers and students, and revealed itself in interesting ways in Emily's lesson that was observed. At one point in the lesson students were instructed on a worksheet to 'Study the following images. How do these images explain how the Nazis persecuted the Jews?' The following extract is from a conversation that a teacher was having with a group of four students about an antisemitic propaganda poster from Nazi Germany in the 1930s (Figure 5.2)

Teacher: *How are Jews being depicted?*

Student A: *They're sort of big, older, greedy.... is that money? He's holding lots of money.*

Teacher: *What's that suggesting?*

Student A: *He works hard.*

Teacher: *But it's in a negative way, propaganda?*

Student A: *He's stealing... greedy.* (LOE: 84-6)



Figure 5.2: Antisemitic propaganda poster from Austria in the 1930s, used by Emily (see Appendix 8.2.1)

There are a number of things happening in this exchange that are revealing. Most notable is the misreading the student has of the intent behind the symbol, problematised by work of semiotic theorists such as de Saussure as well as Pierce who saw the potential for “a great deal of overlapping of categories” (Haward, 2005: 11) in how symbolism is interpreted, establishing an ambiguity of reading requiring cultural and historical context. It is reflective of what Freya said in how she saw that “symbols may have different meanings, and things might get lost” (F: 95). The symbolic interpretation of money for working hard, as opposed to greed, and the teacher intervention to correct this are all of note. There is an implicit sense in this exchange that the student is aware of the duality of interpretation, but lacks contextual understanding to make his initial interpretation relevant to the symbol. Also of note, which was not revealed in this particular conversation, was how much of an awareness of the concept of stereotyping as related to this particular source and its historical context the student had. Simon seemed to have a strategy to rectify this in his comment that “you have to teach the symbolism first, or the attitudes before showing visual aids, because they won’t get it” (S1: 214-5). He also seemed to identify an issue that this particular example did not seem to demonstrate;

Symbolism is probably the biggest difficulty in more early modern, medieval stuff, because a lot is there and a lot of it is suggestive, whereas maybe the twentieth century is more, it's more constructive and more apparent (S1: 207-9).

Whilst the data did not in his case confirm or refute this speculative hypothesis in any depth, the dialogue Emily had with her students over a twentieth century source indicated that at least issues of symbolic interpretation still exist in more contemporary imagery. Some of these issues also played out in Emily's lesson when students were shown an antisemitic propaganda cartoon from 1930s Germany showing a Jew as an octopus (see Figure 5.3). In the focus group, one student stressed the need for contextual knowledge to properly understand what the cartoon was saying

At first you might be quite confused as to what was going on, and you wouldn't really know the stereotypes of the Jews at the time, so you might just think, oh, there's this giant octopus alien thing, taking over everything. Whilst, when you've got more understanding, you can see it as a stereotypical idea of a Jew trying to control Germany (SFE: 162-5).





Figure 5.3: Antisemitic propaganda engraving from Germany in the 1930s, used by Emily (see Appendix 8.2.2)

This observation may have helped others in the group who were struggling to articulate what the image was showing. One, for example, spoke of how “it shows an octopus, or whatever it’s, um, controlling everything” (SFE: 124). It also supports the view of Burke (2001: 40) when he identifies how “the approach (iconography) may be faulted... for its indifference to social context.”

Pragmatically, some teachers described part of the function of images as going beyond the specific context of the lesson, of having a broader, other-than-school domain. Simon posited his lesson as a ‘trial’ to see if he thought working with VHS would be worthwhile in the classroom. In this context, in his reflection of the lesson afterwards, he drew out some positives that went beyond school. As well as both Emily and Simon talking about how students might use visual interpretive skills “outside of school as well” (S2: 125-6; E1: 271-2), he remarked that

I'd do it more for that reason than anything else... that's beyond the usual, traditional specification of the exam and expectations, and just doing it for the reason that they would have engaged with it outside of it, and it makes them more well-rounded if they do (E2: 127-9).

This perceived potential is captured in the ambiguous metaphor of a doorway, where “an image is a doorway, but it’s definitely not a be-all-and-end-all” (E1: 221-2). If we read this doorway as leading from school to beyond-school, then it implies possibilities for students to be more ‘well-rounded,’ however the phrase was meant to be understood.

Though their understanding seemed vague, there was amongst the teachers some tacit awareness of how different media types might operate in different ways. This was mainly reduced to descriptive rather than explanatory statements that provoke more questions than they might answer. Emily, for instance, identified how “political cartoons can be different than a photograph,” (E1: 257) but when she went on to try to explain this further the difference was described in terms of how “because obviously you need to unpick the message behind a political cartoon” (E1: 253-4). By implication there seems a conception here that whereas cartoons need ‘unpicking,’ photographs do not. Instead, photographs are perhaps seen as ‘just recording reality,’ an argument that Sontag counters, reasoning that in actual fact “they change the very idea of reality” (Sontag, 1979: 87). Other teachers struggled also to articulate the difference between different visual media. There was an awareness that difference existed, but not necessarily the implications of this. Jeff, for one, spoke of how

If I'm using a photograph, as a primary source from the time, then I'm going to ask them to think of that differently, than an actual artefact, like that Palestinian flag up there... which is quite a different kettle of fish altogether. Yes? (J1: 228-30)

Before his lesson he also spoke about differentiating between visual mediums, but other than saying this “depends on the lesson... on what the topic is” (J1: 227) it was not apparent how this would be done. The suggestion is that if teachers have a more nuanced understanding of how VHS may operate in similar yet different ways, depending on their contexts, then they are more likely to start to think more substantially about how to calibrate their teaching and pedagogy appropriately. Without such an understanding, however, this may be more difficult to achieve.

Finally, the idea of the visual as being able to be read ‘like a language’ was particularly prevalent among professional educators, who identified links between properties of language and properties of VHS. One, for instance, saw that “like language as well, language comes out of culture, a setting, a time, and is used in a certain way to get certain ends and means, and in a way that’s the same as well” (M: 82-3). The use of the simile ‘like’ and the tentativeness of ‘in a way’ suggests that there is a claim being made here, albeit a cautious one, quite unlike another professional educator who saw understanding images as “like learning to say A, B, C. Yeh?” (R: 455-6). Echoing the idea that looking at paintings is “like learning a language” (F: 448-50), Freya went on to explain how “it’s a language that you know because you’re born with it” (F: 448-50). Yet this sense of both ‘being born with it’ and ‘learning it’ seems contradictory, and may reveal some uncertainty. Soon afterwards, she went on to explain “and then it’s the complications of the language that you learn, and the nuance of the language you learn, the more time you study” (F: 456-7). Again, clear parallels are drawn between features of ‘language’ and features of VHS. Yet as another member of the audience in my presentation of a paper of part of this research observed; “we must be careful with language... it’s not literacy, but now literacies, and we must be cautious of reducing visual to a notion of a textual model” (3<sup>rd</sup> ISA Forum, Vienna, 2016). The argument here is not that there are not any comparisons to be made between the textual and visual ‘language’, but that there is a tendency, as seen in the reflections of professional educators, that a conflation between notions of the ‘visual’ being read as a textual ‘language’ may be taken too far.

## 5.4 Truth Claims

### 5.4.1 *‘It makes it more real’?* What truth-claims are VHS seen to make?

Claims to represent truth or actually be truthful infuse the ways not just VHS are understood, but what many see as central to the practice of ‘doing’ History. Whilst acknowledging the myriad ways in which historical claims to truth may be understood, be it implicated in networks of power that Foucault (1972: 133) describes as “a regime

of truth,” or constructed in gendered terms, as the feminist historian Purkiss (1996) identifies in her reading of patriarchal descriptions of witches. There is a central paradigm that the data explores around strong associations of VHS as inherently truthful, at times clichéd and at other times more modulated, as opposed to a more critical stance that some students and teachers developed that questioned the truth claims that VHS are seen to inherently or more actively make.

It is easy to dismiss the clichés students provide about VHS in terms of truth claims out of hand. Not only do they seem to be accepting uncritically oft repeated maxims such as ‘seeing is believing,’ but in doing so they are adopting a language that is not theirs, which in some way may be seen to make their voice less authentic. Yet they do open a space to consider not only ways in which clichés and truth claim maxims may be deconstructed, but also reflect on the fact that in being repeated, such notions evidently have traction in terms of how students conceptualise visual sources, a motivation to do so which must come from something students are prepared to believe in. Ideas of the literalness of visual representation often inflect students’ comments. When looking at VHS, says one, “it makes it more... it’s actually happened, it’s actually a real event, rather than just being something written about... you can see it in front of your eyes” (SFJ: 109). This sense of ‘real’ as opposed to ‘artifice’ plays out in other student comments, particularly in regard to photography; “that’s a picture they’ve taken, so it’s kind of... it’s what happened, so you can’t really argue with a picture” (SFJ: 113-4). An interesting response came in the focus groups when students were asked to consider the relationship between text and imagery, in this case the front page of *Private Eye* satirising the assassination of Verwoerd (see Appendix 8.2.4), in terms of how they represented truth, or truths. One student reflected on the picture, saying that

It makes it more literal, because if it’s words you could easily write words, and you can just say anything you want, and it could be fictional, it could be non-fictional, it could be anything, it doesn’t even have to be the truth, but when you see a picture of something that’s actually happened, of an actual impact on a group, then it makes it more real (SFJ: 103-6)

This seems to reveal a sense of trusting visual sources to be inherently truthful, unlike text which is seen as plying the boundaries between fact and fiction at will. Both theorists and practitioners find this problematic, whilst also at times recognising some of the epistemological underpinnings for such beliefs. This is seen in claims from some theorists that directly attack the notion that ‘you can see it’; “what you see is not what it is... visual quicksand opens” (Schama, 2005: loc 189) and “seeing is not believing. It is something we do, a kind of performance” (Mirzoeff, 2015: 15). Yet in an earlier comment, Mirzoeff (2009: 119) himself indicates where student perceptions may partly come from, when he talks of how “photography is distinct from other media because it shows us something was there when the shutter opened.” Photography itself, as Jordanova (2012: 145) notes, “raises epistemological issues” inherent in its nature, where photography is “often seen as a pure representation of reality” (Allen, 2000: 177). Theorists like Kracauer (Koch, 2000: 39) see such a ‘reality’ as a “construct,” dependent as it is in the relationship between the context around the taking of the photograph and the way it is seen and understood at the moment of viewing. Sontag (2003: 41) highlights this discrepancy over how photographs are interpreted, supporting a constructivist idea of photographs in seeing how “the photographic image cannot simply be a transparency for something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude.” The extent, then, and ways in which the visual makes it more real seems more complex than originally considered.

A couple of interesting perspectives on this came from the interview with Martha. One was part of a discussion on the relationship between original visual source material and copies, where “some kind of facsimile works to a point,” but what that point is was left unexplored. Berger’s (1972: 12) development of Benjamin’s work on mechanical reproduction indicates possible routes in terms of how when a painting is copied “its meaning changes – or more exactly its meaning multiplies and fragments into many meanings.” How this plays out in the classroom, where copies of original source material are the mainstay of a teacher’s archive was unsaid, yet problematic. Issues around such visual manipulations as cropping, adaptation, contextualisation, mimicry and juxtaposition all have important implications around the truth-claims images may

make. Freya also touched on the idea of VHS as an instrument for ‘proof’ and the implications of this on her practice

what they were getting at was that the visual image proves that someone was there but also keeps them alive, and that is the whole point about History and source material because it’s proof of the past... keeps them alive (F: 385-7).

It seems from this observation that notions of ‘proof’ and ‘keeping them alive’ are being conflated. Whilst there is potentially a connection between the two, it is an unnecessary one: one can exist without the other. But the notion of a visual image as providing proof seems to echo some of the student comments around ‘you can’t really argue with a picture.’

Towards the more critical end of the paradigm of visual sources being inherently truthful come a number of comments which predominantly came from students themselves. Some students spoke about how they saw VHS as potentially staged; “they could be staged or something” (SFE: 74) and “so you wouldn’t know if it’s been fully staged or whether it’s all real” (SFE: 82) showed a scepticism that was in marked contrast to students in Jeff’s focus group. One student applied this scepticism to a real-life school setting, where “like even at school they’ll say ‘smile’ like when you get in a school photo, like you’re not always happy, but you’ve got to...” (SFE: 94) which seems to reflect the belief that “photographic realism is a style not a property” (Howells & Matson, 2009: 45). Some students and Emily also reflected on how VHS may be mechanically altered and manipulated. Emily spoke of how

the hope is they realise that... on the media they're using... maybe what I'm looking at on Facebook or Youtube, maybe it isn't real? Maybe it's been photoshopped or maybe it's used for a certain purpose. (E1: 269-70)

The answer from the student focus group from her lesson was affirmative: ‘nowadays, it’s more... you can photo-shop anything really’ (SFE: 78), which links to the notion of authenticity, and Benjamin’s (2002: 103) writing on how “the whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological... reproduction” to which could now be added

‘technological manipulation.’ The question of why the discrepancy between Emily and Jeff’s student focus groups’ understanding of the truth-claims of VHS was so apparent seems to demand addressing, though to a large part attempts to account for this must be speculative and intuitive. Clearly there are different dynamics in each group, they have different teachers with different pedagogical styles, and different discourses seemed to dominate and inform each group. However, Mirzoeff’s (2015: 19) belief that “readers operate a flexible zone of viewing, in that it is accepted that a photograph can be altered, but not changed so much it is absurd” may be part of an explanation also. Such a view may start to go towards explaining why the two groups may hold different conceptions that may not necessarily invalidate each other. Emily also revealed a more critical stance towards VHS in terms of their potential to be manipulated, questioning, in the use of “German propaganda images... How do you know that’s what you’re seeing there? Like, what element in the picture makes you think that...” (E2: 42-3) Students in Simon’s focus group, when asked “Are pictures factual do you think? Do they tell the truth?” also responded with caution

they were made to record a certain moment, but even then they were created to, like, make someone look better, or maybe subconsciously someone in a certain way, when they’re making or painting a picture (SFS: 88-90).

So, when Card (2008: 21) urges that “there is a pressing need for greater visual literacy in our society – understanding how manipulation happens,” the evidence from this limited investigation seems mixed; clearly some students adopt a critical, sceptical stance, whilst others are more inclined to believe that what they look at is a ‘literal’ truth.

One final aspect that emerged from the interviews was a comparison between the truth-claims of text and images. At times this seemed quite paradoxical. Simon’s student focus group showed how students were wrestling with quite contradictory comparative concepts. On the one hand was the assertion that “with an image, I find it quite helpful because you can look at it and it gives you ideas, or, things that are facts”

(SFS: 72-3). Set against this was an opposite understanding from a different student within the same focus group, who spoke of how

it depends what you're looking for. 'Cos if you're looking for factual information, then perhaps a paragraph from a textbook about the Night of Long Knives will probably help you a lot more than an image (SFS: 67-8).

There is a discrepancy, however, between the things they describe, the former as 'giving facts' and the latter as seeking to explain, which may possibly start to account for this difference. Jeff's student focus group also indicated that such contrasting positions may actually be inherent in the form that the text and the visual take, where "in a text you don't know if like it's going to over-exaggerate it a bit, compared to, like, a photo, where you can see their faces and emotions" (SFJ: 73-4). This seems to imply a perception that images have an inherent transparency, especially in the way they may be read or experienced emotionally (Bell, 1987: 6) that does not exist in text, which appears more opaque, difficult and deceptive.

## **5.5 Historical Interpretation**

### **5.5.1 '*Double vision*'? How are VHS understood and interpreted?**

So far references to the relation between VHS and the teaching of History have been at times oblique. This chapter in particular, and the chapter on Pedagogy to an extent, seek to address this, reflecting the strong connections that many theorists see between the disciplines of Art and History. This section will start by discussing notions of subjectivity and objectivity that interviewees held in the interpretation of VHS, in which a particular discourse around autonomy of interpretation, and the freedom to interpret VHS 'your way' dominated in all three participating groups. There is much that has been written in the realm of literary theory, such as in textual interpretation and reader response theory that is germane to this analysis, which will be integrated with the research findings to help conceptualise what is being said and enacted. Teachers and professional educators then spoke about their understandings of how VHS can help students' conceptions of time, in terms of being able to make



'connections' between historical periods, and particularly in the concept of presentism and what Card (2008: 92) terms as "double vision." Whilst there has already been some discussion of the role of context and background knowledge, this will now be specifically applied to the teaching of History, in how it shapes and impedes understandings of it. Historical interpretation was also described by many interviewees as being a critical discipline where students, through VHS, are encouraged to interrogate narratives of the past and generate particular types of historical thinking. This was apparent in terms of power relations that were described in particular, especially in the 'reclaiming' of what were seen to be 'secret' and 'hidden' histories. Finally, teachers' broad perspectives of the utility of using VHS in the classroom will be examined, both in their certainties and their tentativeness.

Arising from the interview data is a perception amongst a variety of interviewees of the autonomy students have in interpreting VHS as opposed to text, manifesting itself in conceptions of ownership, curating, making decisions and being able to do it 'your way' in a field where there are no 'right' answers. Students comments that "you can decide it just for yourself" (SFE: 54) and "you have to... interpret it *your way*" [student's emphasis] (SFE: 143), were closely mirrored by a student in Simon's focus group who spoke of how visual sources were "made for you to interpret your way" (SFS: 103-4). The same student went on to expand on this theme by comparing visual with text-based sources

with text a lot of the time it will just tell you a fact, and you can't really dispute it, you can't argue with it, you can't interpret it in your own way, whereas if it's a picture you can look at the overall theme of the picture as it is, but you can dig a bit deeper and work out what they're not saying (SFS: 124-7).

Much of literary criticism's responses to text and issues of objectivity and subjectivity seem apposite here. One element of this that supports such student-centred interpretations is reader response theory, which poses two questions central to this aspect of the investigation; "can literary texts (or VHS) genuinely enjoy as many meanings as readers are able to create?... (and) are some readings essentially more

valid and justifiable than others?" (Davis & Womack, 2002: 51). The evidence from the student perspective seems to be both 'yes' and 'no.' Guerin (1992: 332-3) explains; "a text does not even exist, in a sense, until it is read by some reader. Indeed, the reader has a part in creating or actually does create the text," in the same way that Tompkins (1980: x) writes about attempting to "destroy... the objectivity of the text (or image)." In a pragmatic sense, for teachers this poses a problem: if 'anything goes' then the argument follows that meaning becomes relatively meaningless. So, as Emily states, "when they're all going to come in with these different ideas of what do these things mean, and what images mean," (E1: 86-7) what is then to be done? Emily also expresses the issue, without suggesting a remedy, when she says; "the viewership of it is entirely subjective to that person's point of view. They all experience something different" (S1: 170-1), which chimes with Barthes' (1977: 148) view that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author." Some, however, suggest alternative ways of looking at this. When Burke (1992: 61), for instance, in referring to the use of visual sources of evidence, suggests "might we not venture that the birth of the reader is not achieved at the cost of the death of the author," Eco (1992: 25) suggests an alternative way of looking at the problem; "between the intention of the author... and the intention of the interpreter.... There is a third possibility. There is an *intention of the text* [image]." Yet despite these ways of conceiving issues of subjectivity, both teachers and students seem unaware of them, relying instead on thinking of the interpreter-as-arbiter.

Some further insights into the issue are provided by professional educators. One of these, allied to the notion of seeing things 'your way,' is that of ownership. The observation that "the children... developed a strong sense of ownership towards the... painting" (F: 349-50) illustrates a connection where the investment of time in a creative project with the painting produced an affinity and sense of possession-yet-not-possession of it. An alternative interpretation of the subjective position was provided by Ralph, who at first seemed supportive of the student position that "it's not the right answer, it's their answer," (R: 552) yet hinted at an explanation of this when he said "it's not about getting it right, it's about the experience, and about being informed of life" (R: 567-8). A reading of this could be that a 'your way' subjective

reaction might be understood in terms of being an emotional reaction as opposed to an intellectual one, in which case a personal, individual response that is unlike that of others need not be so problematic.

An aspect of historical interpretation using VHS that seemed less controversial, but no less important, is the sense of how the past is seen differently from different historical perches. Simon, talking about using contemporary maps, described how “this is how people saw their world, and this is how we’re seeing what they’re seeing as well’ (S1: 129-30). In essence this reflects Burke’s (2001: 187) view that “images give access not to the social world directly but to contemporary views of that world,” and Card’s concept of ‘double vision,’ though this could be fractured and multiplied further into a blurred metaphor of multiple visions incorporating different viewpoints in an historiography of looking. Such multiple viewpoints seemed to be implied when Simon went on to wonder “how does this (seeing) work in their world, in the medieval, um, period, how does this work in, um, early modern Europe, how does this work in the twentieth century?” (S1: 134-5). ‘Double vision’ as a concept, though, does not account for the kind of ‘double vision’ that may occur within the same time period, where different groups and individuals operating in different contexts see events differently. There is also the perceived danger of “presentism... the act of viewing the past through the lens of the present” (Wineburg, 2001: 19) that Simon seemed to guard against, but was omitted from other teacher accounts. Husbands (2003: 56) also raises the thorny element that

denies that the ideas and beliefs of people in the past can *in principle* be reconstructed: the gap between our own mindset and that of people in the past is so great, and the evidential materials so weak that no intellectually valid reconstruction can be attempted,

though he goes on to counter this by “carefully examining the intellectual procedures involved in imaginative understandings of the past” (2003: 57). Professional educator accounts show a more explicit awareness of ‘double vision,’ to the extent that this proved a key feature of one of the education sessions taught in the National Gallery, where

the other thing we had recently was Wellington... and how his image had been used over time... as a young man, and then as a hero, and then as an anti-hero, and then more satire (M: 344-6).

Again, a contrast with textual language is informative. The perception that “art has the added benefit of speaking across time and across culture, in a way that language doesn’t” (M: 85-6) seems odd. The key phrase here, though, seems to be “in a way”; it’s not suggested that language does not speak across time, it just communicates differently. This thought was left undeveloped in the interview: it would have been interesting to know more about how this difference was being understood.

In terms of the ‘doing’ of History as a critical, interrogative form of enquiry, one aspect referred to by teachers was the necessity of conveying the complexity of the past. When Simon reflected on the importance of “helping them to also understand the complexity,” Wineburg (2001: 11) supports this call, and takes it further to a call to arms, declaring “the goal of historical study should be to teach us what we can’t see, to acquaint us with the congenital blurriness of vision.” Further alluding to complexity, Emily expanded on this by saying that “a lot of them are really learning that there’s different interpretations of History, and that propaganda does exist, and people take photographs in certain ways, for certain reasons” (E1: 265-6). Part of this complexity is seeing how the same images can be read in different ways, as when Jeff spoke of “that pic, that thing works on two levels, it tells you black South Africans, jumping for joy that he’s (Verwoerd’s) gone, but it tells you a lot about British attitudes to apartheid” (J1: 282-4). Both Jeff and Simon gave an interesting perspective on this in terms of the relationship between the choice of image and the ability to analyse visual sources. In commenting about his use of a cartoon depicting the Night of Long Knives (Figure 5.4) Simon said

that would have been a very good image to use because it has all the stylistic devices that were mentioned by the, um, the German teacher within the article. Symbolism would be quite um... the citation, exaggeration, er, the national figures, in fact they had everything in there (S2: 57-9).



Figure 5.4: David Low cartoon of The Night of Long Knives, used by Simon (see Appendix 8.2.8)

This connects to a comment he made to his students about the cartoon during the lesson, saying that “this is very good because it fits the functions of all the things needed to analyse satirical cartoons properly” (LOS: 84-5). This is particularly interesting for a couple of reasons. Firstly, is the assumption that there is a ‘proper’ way to analyse visual sources, which seems to run counter to some theorists who explore a variety of ways, as opposed to the singular ‘way’, be it through, for example, iconology, form, art history, ideology, semiotics and hermeneutics (Howells & Negreiros, 2012). In Simon’s defence, however, the restrictions of the GCSE examination syllabus and mark scheme at times points to a more mechanistic formula for analysing sources, which pragmatically helps students’ attainment under the demands of examination. A second revealing aspect of his comment is the idea that there are some sources that lend themselves better to interpretation than others, and he gives a sense of what those qualities may be. He is not the only one. Jeff also speaks about a cartoon about South Africa that students had previously analysed (Figure 5.5), where

we'd done a previous cartoon, the one about V-Verwoerd, you know, and throwing the ap... the apple cores over to his neighbour, yes, which is a very good source. They understood that source perfectly, you know, as I said, it works on the same level (J1: 20-2).

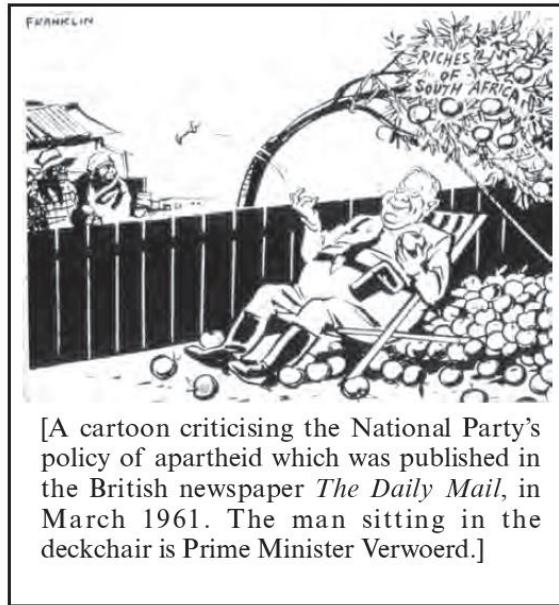


Figure 5.5: Daily Mail  
Verwoerd cartoon, used by  
Jeff (see Appendix 8.2.5)

So, by implication that there is seen to be an apparent hierarchy of VHS, where some may be deemed 'very good' and others by implication less so.

A related aspect of students' ability to examine VHS critically, apparent in comments by teachers and professional educators, occurs within the paradigm of ideology, specifically within power relations. Educational practice in the National Portrait Gallery in particular seemed at times to attempt to subvert both historical and current power dynamics. Two projects related to this that Martha ran were to do with images constituting 'People,' part of *The Face of Britain* exhibition, and an education session looking at banknotes and the gendered selection of images of people to appear on them. Commenting on the former, Martha spoke of how "people who aren't named don't get to come forward... so People allowed us to bring out those unnamed people" (M: 333-4), so that whereas "they didn't get recognition in their time... now they do" (M: 376). This fits very much into the thinking of Berger (1972: 26), who states "the art of any period tends to serve the interests of the ruling class... what matters now is who uses the current language of images, and for what purpose." Clearly, in this case they

are being used by educators, in an attempt to encourage students to interrogate and reconfigure dominant narratives. Martha expands on this notion in describing some examples of how students responded to this approach

Some of them are secret women, they said, meaning they weren't known in their time for their achievements, but are now... and now they all suddenly want to know how many secret women there are now, and how we are going to find out about that... and what role does the visual have in that? (M: 379-83)

A connection is drawn here by the visualisation of the term “secret women” in rethinking dominant narratives in gendered terms. When Berger (1972: 41) writes of how “men *act* and women *appear*” there’s a seeming simultaneous harmony and dissonance: students discuss the place of women on banknotes, who yet are seen to be appearing rather than acting, though the context is different in each of these.

Desai, Hamilton & Mattson (2010: 68) identify educational spaces as key to performing this. When they say ‘we were inspired to imagine a classroom as a new kind of space that has the potential to creatively disrupt monumental histories,’ there is a powerful sense that the public space they are describing could easily be the National Portrait Gallery. But the interview revealed gallery spaces have not always been used in this way. Just as the subversion of historical narratives of power is played out through portraiture, so too is this mirrored through the enactment of practice in the gallery. Martha commented that the approach used here “loosened the hold of the Gallery as people make their own interpretations” (M: 336-7) through the way portraits were rehung, and how “that’s quite unusual for the Gallery to allow learning to shape what they hang quite so much” (M: 173). The relationship between classroom space and gallery space is an interesting one here, in the sense that both are forms of public rather than private space, albeit with different levels of access, and how they need to be seen not isolation from each other, but rather as a dialogic relationship. Two of the professional educators had actually previously been teachers in school spaces before, transplanting and adapting practice to gallery space, whereas teachers were bringing students from classroom to gallery, forming a melding of space and practice. Again,

literary criticism seems to have valuable insights to offer. By replacing the words 'writes' for 'shows' and 'writing' for 'showing,' Said (1983: 7) could be seen to be commenting just as aptly on VHS as on texts when he questions

who writes [shows]? For whom is the writing [showing] being done? In what circumstances? These, it seems to me, are the questions whose answers provide us with the ingredients making for a politics of interpretation.

These questions seem just as apt for the secondary school classroom as they are for galleries.

A final related issue is the role patronage plays in the production of art, and how this is seen in teaching through VHS. There was a moment in Simon's lesson when he showed students an image of David Cameron drawn by the cartoonist Steve Bell for *The Guardian* newspaper, satirising his relationship with the NHS (Figure 5.6). In this part of



Figure 5.6: Steve Bell cartoon from The Guardian newspaper, used by Simon (see Appendix 8.2.7)

the lesson, the dialogue centred around the role of the newspaper as a patron for cartoonists like Steve Bell.

Teacher: *The Guardian is traditionally left-wing, supporting Labour. Certainly not Conservative.*

Student: *If the Labour Party was in power, would Steve Bell mock them too?*

Teacher: *He would do regardless of whoever's in power, it's the cartoonist's job. He'd maybe be a little more in power? (LOS: 147-50)*



It's interesting here the perception was that the cartoonist in this instance was seen as possessing some form of political impartiality, that his vocation was just to satirise. Also, that the questioning of the relationship between artist and patron came unsolicited from a student. Whether students may appreciate that this instance may not apply to the relationship of all cartoonists with their patrons, however, and that each instance needs to be understood within its own context, was undeveloped.

In thinking about what knowledge and experiences students bring to the process of historical interpretation, and how these mediate practice, much was remarked on by both teachers and professional educators. In reflecting on the 'stuff' students bring with them to school, Emily thought that "they always bring stuff into the class anyways... they already have ideas of things that they're learning outside of class" (E1: 79-80), and continued that "obviously they're not empty vessels – they've got lots of stuff we've learned from the past" (E1: 87-8). Much of this may seem unsurprising, but it's notable that she placed emphasis and showed awareness of this, reflecting as she held a common theoretical belief that "the past life history of the individual and the past history of the situation strongly influence that learning" (Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008: 28). It is the way, though, that this is enacted in the classroom, and how the teacher might account for this in practice, in this instance in the experience of VHS, that the implications of this need to be directed towards.

To support students in their interpretation of VHS, it was interesting just how vehement one teacher was in stressing the need to provide context. Although he was specifically talking about the interpretation of visual sources, it would have been interesting to know whether he would have been as insistent with textual sources. My impression at the time, and looking back at the transcript, is this would not have been so, perhaps attributable to the immediacy, the iconic power-of-the-visual that such sources potentially hold. On his use of the photograph on the front of *Private Eye*, Jeff remarked that

I would never, ever put a source like that in front of a class that have never touched apartheid before. That would be, that would be... you know... madness... well – obviously I’ve only ever given that source when we have some contextual background from previous lessons (J1: 332-3, 334).

In discussing a Nazi propaganda poster he’d used in an A-level Government & Politics lesson, Jeff went on to warn of the potential implications of using decontextualized visual material, “If you give them that source just isolated... if we didn’t discuss it, it’ll end up leading them down, you know, the, the... mode of thinking the far right would like you to have” (J1: 209-10). Simon linked this idea of the imperative for contextualisation with one of time, saying “from using visual sources from maybe more the earlier periods, you really have got to give hell of a lot more context” (S1: 210). This perception of understanding historical context as time-related is further problematized from Freya’s point of view, in that

when this thing is made, it doesn’t have an explanation alongside of the society it was painted for, or the individual it was painted for, he or she would understand the information (F: 332-3).

As Jordanova (2012: 20) notes, “provenance is rarely visible”: signatures and visual references to the artist aside, it can often be difficult to understand the process of the production of VHS. Whilst time may compound the need for contextualisation, there are other ways in which a lack of context may occlude understanding on imagery, be it for instance in spatial, cultural or political terms. The cultural dimension of this was alluded to in the idea that “our society’s so different from... going back to Dürer’s painting of Venice, that a lot of what he is communicating is almost impenetrable to us” (F: 394-6).

## 5.6 Intertextuality

### 5.6.1. ‘*When the dialogue begins*’? How is intertextuality experienced?

Intertextuality in this section is understood to refer to the relationship that VHS have with other texts, be they visual, textual, oral, material or other. It is the sense of “the fact that texts do not occur in isolation from each other” (Bax, 2011: 27) in that “a text... does not function in a closed system” (Still & Worton, 1990: 1) and instead

needs to be considered in terms of a “relationship between texts’ meaning” (Dittmer, 2010: 44). This relationship needs to be understood as a dynamic dialogic process, in which texts speak to each other, informing and reforming ways in which they are understood to a point where “this intertextual chain demonstrates...hybridity,” (Allen, 2000: 181) and as a web of relationships. Whilst there was less explicit mention of intertextuality in the data than for the themes of other sections of this analysis, there were nevertheless two interesting discussions that came out from the interviews; one around perceptions of the function and importance of intertextuality when working with VHS, especially amongst teachers, and another around the specific practice of the deliberate juxtaposition of different images in a gallery space that provoked issues and raised questions, ultimately about how the perceived efficacy of such an approach might translate from gallery space to classroom space.

In terms of stressing the importance of intertextuality, teachers started by articulating the idea of a ‘need for other sources.’ This took the form of trying to use a range of visual sources, as in Emily’s comment that “I try to use different kinds of visual sources... I don’t think there’s one that I prefer over the others. I think they’re all quite integral in the learning” (E1: 245-6), as well as the integration of textual sources with the visual; “I don’t think we should only teach with visual sources – I think it’s good to, you know, bring in written sources” (E1: 132). Simon agreed, stressing the need for multiple sources to get a ‘full picture’; “sometimes it’s a case of one image alone doesn’t tell you everything... you have to study a visual range of those to make those big pictures,” (S1: 225-7). So far though, conceptions are more around the need for a range of visual and other sources to achieve a ‘big picture,’ rather than an explicit appreciation of how they might speak to and shape each other. A sense of this does emerge from some of the teacher interviews, but only vaguely. Explicitly talking about the need to use visual and textual sources together, Emily spoke about how “it makes a greater impact” (E1: 143) and “they kind of reinforce one another” (E1: 147), which Jeff echoed in the comment that he wanted “both the sources to re-enforce each other... that... most people did not support the apartheid system” (J2: 130-1). But this is as far as it goes. It seems perhaps a little cosy: there is little sense of visual sources being used with others to interrogate and disrupt meaning. As Desai, Hamlin &

Mattson (2010: 31) point out, enabling “your students to read intertextually... to move between historical, literary, and visual materials as they interpret the sources” can help achieve more nuanced and textured ways of thinking historically. The key phrase ‘moving between’ implies more dynamic, iterative possibilities lacking in teacher accounts. Reflecting on her lesson where she had exposed students to a variety of images and texts connected with an introduction to teaching about the Holocaust, Emily probably came the closest to the concept of the dynamic possibilities of intertextuality when she described how “I wanted to try and get lots of images in there as well, so they could start tying in what was happening during that time period” (E2: 18-19). ‘Tying in’ here invokes a sense of action and performance in a way that ‘moving between’ implies, though the former seems to suggest a pre-determined act of synthesis, whilst the latter points towards something more open-ended, more open to the possibilities that intertextual interpretation may invite.

Yet practice described among professional educators seemed to indicate a greater awareness and embracing of the potentials of encouraging an intertextual approach, specifically in terms of the juxtaposition of the visual in terms of how images can be hung in galleries to ‘talk’ to each other. In the hanging of *‘The Face of Britain’* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, Martha described how

It was hung not in a chronological way, which was new for the gallery, so you have that real intertextuality of time, talking... pictures across time talking across time, instead of sort of sitting next to each other, which really added another level (M: 312-15).

Describing the process further, the idea of ‘talking pictures’ was framed in the sense of provoking “different conversations and different juxtapositions” (M: 339-40). On a meta-level, it was suggested that “there’s often a lot of interesting curatorial choices that are going on, um, about why you’ve hung this person opposite their arch enemy” (M: 219-221) and around “who’s missing” (M: 229). The idea of juxtaposition as adding ‘another level’ is interesting, and was explored further in interview where it was articulated in an almost transformative role, a tipping point where juxtaposition was “when the dialogue begins” (M: 316) where “with an image, it’s when you put it up

against another image it really begins to come to life” (M: 315). This was a practice Ralph engaged with as well, in a project which brought into the redesigned Imperial War Museum the remains of a car damaged in an attack in Mutanabbi Street, Baghdad, Iraq in March 2007. In so doing, he described his role as

artist-as-curator... when the artist-as-curator would think differently by putting an object into a room which is full of other objects, which has a different character, and we changed the relationship of the objects (R: 101-3).

Other writers seem supportive of the way Ralph seemed to be describing and understanding juxtaposition as a powerful pedagogical tool for teachers. Desai, Hamlin & Mattson’s (2010: 87) concept of “juxtaposition... to communicate new ideas and suggest unexpected relationships between disparate things” certainly seemed to be happening in the National Portrait Gallery, as was Berger’s (1972: 22) conception of how “the meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it.” It also seemed to be echoing a pedagogical comparative approach in which Jordanova (2012: 226) sees “comparison (as) a fundamental part of visual skill, it prompts specific reactions.” Indeed, in commenting on artist Fred Wilson’s juxtapositional work in ‘Mining the Museum’ and ‘Mine/Yours’ (Figure 5.7), it seems that “audiences were provoked into questioning



Figure 5.7 - Fred Wilson - Mine/Yours, 1995  
Whitney Museum of American Art (Appendix 8.3.1)

not only how history is represented, but how it is obscured” (Desai, Hamlin & Mattson, 2010: 4). There is potential here for encouraging students to develop deeper historical conceptual understandings that focus not just on the substance of portrayals of the

past, but a sense of the acts of portraying the past, and how they are inherently politically implicated. It may also help replace more 'superficial and obvious' intertextual understandings with "a much more complex conception of the interactions between texts, producers of texts and their readers' lifeworlds" (Meinhof & Smith, 2000: 3). The extent to which the potential of gallery practice in intertextuality might intersect with and inform classroom practice, constrained by curriculum in ways that galleries maybe are not, to develop such historical thinking is ripe for exploration. The sense of terms such as intertextuality being "not categories but springboards to deeper and wider cultural understanding and dialogue" (Orr, 2003: 181) seems to open up possibilities for the classroom that in this investigation were yet to be explored.

## **5.7 Pedagogical practice**

### **5.7.1 'Detective work'? How are pedagogical practices described and accounted for?**

Central to the teaching of History are the pedagogical implications of working with VHS. Key to this, all groups spoke at times and in different ways about a preference for VHS being used as a tool in a constructivist pedagogy, which at times was described as a 'layered approach' and at times had an explicitly socially constructivist bent. Connected to this were notions of 'enquiry' based learning and 'authenticity', in which the role of the teacher was considered, as well as ideas of 'student-centred' approaches to learning, within a context of what some termed as 'authentic' learning. The role of different forms of questioning with VHS was discussed by all groups, and there was an idea, primarily among professional educators, of developing a role of 'students-as-curators,' where students make curatorial decisions with images. Unlike other participant groups, teachers focused in particular on different ways in which teaching students to work with VHS as being part of a 'skills' approach arose, whilst professional educators focused more on notions of creativity. Finally, teachers and professional educators were prompted at interview to reflect on some of the potentially more problematic aspects of working with VHS, in which restricted choice and quality of image were two dominant themes.

A constructivist approach to teaching using VHS dominated descriptions of teacher pedagogy, to the exclusion of almost any other. Whilst there were some slight variations in how this was understood, the dominant conception articulated by Freya was one where

about this transmission-didactic form of learning, which *might* work for some people, but it doesn't always... it's not necessarily work (sic) for everybody, because a constructivist approach, where people bring their prior experiences, where people in a sense play the detective, they use their imagination first, they don't *have* to be told. *They* have a think about what it might be. And *then* you can have a facilitator who gives you some further information to take you on the route of what it actually *is* (F: 177-181)

In a variety of accounts, it was interesting to see how this approach seemed to tally with previously discussed ideas of authenticity, in terms of being able to interpret VHS 'your way.' Dewey (1910) describes such an approach, rooted in the pragmatism of experiential learning, in which he stresses "the importance of uncertainty – a state of hesitancy, perplexity and doubt... an inquiry in order to test." This sense of learning with VHS being a layered, iterative process was articulated in a number of ways. It was emphasised on more than one occasion by Martha, who spoke of a construction of meaning involving; "What did you get first time round? What did you get second time round?" (M: 444-5). Freya's metaphor of a 'route' to learning is notable, yet it is a teleological journey to a final destination that has a positivist spin in terms of uncovering 'what it actually is.' While this may chime with what has been described as "what our age understands: that there should be outcomes and conclusions, and that these are the important thing" (Hogan & Smith, 2009: 176) it is set in contrast to a Socratic understanding of knowledge construction which has been described as being centred on the idea that it is "the greatest illusion to think that any human could arrive at the final goal" (Hogan & Smith, 2009: 170). Without mentioning this aspect, students spoke of their preference for a similar approach, one where

I think they should let us analyse it first, then ask us what we've thought about it, and then give us a bit more information... and look at how it changes our interpretation of it (SFE: 182-4).

This approach is clearly aligned to Friere's (1970: 72) challenge to the "banking system" approach to learning, where students are turned into "receptacles" to be "filled by the teacher," rooted in the notion that "all students need to do is consume information, memorise, store it, and not question it" (Bullen, 2012: 23). Another metaphor used is that of the teacher using a 'drip feed' approach where

as a first time reader, you take so much from it, and then it will have to be put into some kind of context, or you can drip feed a date or another key piece of information that would enlighten this (M: 289-91).

An aspect of this pedagogical approach that all groups touched on was the social context in which learning takes place: a social constructivist pedagogy for working with VHS. Both practitioners, students and theorists tended to see this in a positive light, with a notable exception. Comments such as "you always kind of learn from other people as well" (E2: 98); 'I think you kind of learn from each other as well" (SFE: 39); and "it's quite good to see what people's opinions of them are" (SFS: 104-5) seem in keeping with a number of social constructivist ideas. Whereas in a more general sense some writers see "the learning of the individual is also social" (Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008: 38), some also see this as a particular feature of VHS. Card (2008: 64), for instance, believes "pictures lend themselves to the development of learning by negotiation and sharing," though this seems more intuitive and lacking in explanation of what it is about pictures that do this, over text. An interesting epistemological way of thinking about this is the way sharing eliminates the possibility of students as being all-knowing omniscient learners; that knowledge is dispersed, negotiated and articulated and re-articulate as it is discussed. Reflecting on her lesson, which contained a significant element of group work, Emily felt that in working with VHS

I think maybe that's why I like kids working in groups as well, because they learn from each other, so if they all had different ideas about what things meant, or what they saw, and so they could help each other (E2: 81-2).



This seems to enable students to gain more from group interaction than they would individually; a more complete, holistic picture formed in a way where “*alone* we cannot extract the fullest possible idea or information from an object. We need to make a practice of discussing with each other” (Morris, 1989: 18). Yet there is also a tension that was evident between the ideal and the real of group work. Whereas Freya spoke of how “they developed creativity and excitement about creating something as a group,” (F: 350) Emily felt that “sometimes it’s difficult to get the kids to kind of collaborate on their work” (E2: 99). Contextualising the group dynamics, pedagogy and learning environment may help to understand this better. Certainly in the lesson I observed students seemed to collaborate positively in groups, only becoming distracted as it seemed their task lacked pace towards the end, something Emily herself acknowledged.

Closely connected to this constructivist approach was the concept of enquiry, which professional educators in particular seemed keen to discuss and share their ideas about. Terms such as ‘discovery,’ ‘detective work,’ and ‘working it through’ are scattered through interview data. A more developed response from Ralph connected such a ‘discovery’ approach with a sense of ownership that has surfaced in other accounts

The sense of discovery, when you have that sort of breakthrough, to the intention of the commission and the painting, I think that means that you are responsible for your own learning, and you feel more informed ... I've written down informed and circled it (R: 415-18).

Jeff, reflecting on his lesson, felt he had possibly been too didactic and ‘leading’, especially in terms of strongly framing and prompting students to articulate what he saw as being the right responses when they had difficulties interpreting images. He reflected that “I wonder with sources like that if it’s not better just to put them, and leave them, and then see what they come up with instead of leading them too much,” (J2: 9-11). It was interesting that this was one of his first reflections in the post-lesson interview, and that both the space for reflection and capacity within himself to be reflective enabled a shift in thinking about practice.

Forms of historical enquiry using pictures seemed particularly effective when framed as a 'challenge' for students. One professional educator described this process, where

We've got a display at the moment called Black Chronicles, and it's pictures of the black community in Britain, and there's an African choir that visited, and some of them were named and some of them weren't named... How are you going to name them? How are you going to find out what this means? And they love it. They say like... well I'd go to a photographic studio and find out... they're piecing it all together and realising that yeh, it's a discovery and you're a pioneer... revisiting and challenging (M: 479-486).

Part of this challenge involved the concept of authenticity, which seemed to be important in informing pedagogy. Some went so far as to clarify what they meant by this; "'authentic'... is a decision that happens in the world, as opposed to me creating some fake... thing" (M: 419-20). Exemplifying this, Martha went further to describe how "we're asking young people to come up with their theories, based on the visual evidence... so it's a real world authentic challenge that they are given" (M: 406-8). An aspect of authenticity to be drawn out here which is implicit in these descriptions is one of motivation, the way students are following a line of enquiry that they are engaged in and have invested something in. Some theorists have spoken of this when they have described how an authentic learning experience is one where

the teacher is concerned to focus neither on the learner in isolation, nor on some pre-specified piece of knowledge, but on the *engagement* of the learners with whatever seriously occupies them" (Bonnett & Cuypers, 2009: 339).

Connected to the idea of enquiry, all three participant groups discussed conceptions of the role questioning could play in looking at VHS. An aspect of this that professional educators monopolised was the idea of questioning as an open-ended rather than closed process, reflecting the view that "we would do well to think of images as permanently unfinished sites of meaning-construction" (Howells & Matson, 2009: 9). Ralph reflected this, mentioning how "I think that what's interesting is there's no concrete outcome. It's just getting them to think about that, critically in a way" (R:

476-7). An alternative take on this is the idea of “letting the curriculum come out of that rather than the other way round” (F: 386), which came out in the National Gallery’s *‘Take One Picture’* project for schools. In part this seems to reflect the greater freedom galleries may have to work with schools in less pre-determined ways, other than the spaces many schools occupy, in which learning is more curriculum-driven, and pre-determined. While this has political implications from the local to the level of government policy, Massey’s (2005: 9) argument is that thinking about space goes beyond the political. Her claim that

it is part of my argument, not just that the spatial is political, but rather that thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated ... can be an essential element in the imaginative structure

seems reflective of the way in which both gallery and school spaces, in their specific contexts, have the capacity to ‘shake up’ and re-think the way schools’ curriculums are delivered.

For teachers, questions have other functions too. For some the confluence of visual sources and questioning can act as an aid to spark interest and curiosity by encouraging student-led rather than teacher-led questions. Emily, for example, spoke about how, “even if they don’t understand something, it’s still sometimes good to show an image because it *makes* them ask questions and *makes* them curious” (E1: 206-7) [teacher’s emphasis]. This was exemplified in her lesson where she started by using a questioning grid; a series of questions around a photograph of Jewish schoolchildren in Czechoslovakia in the 1942. Students seemed to generate a wide range of questions, some of which, such as “I was just wondering what society was like in the period when the photo was taken” (LOE: 36) seemed to show a capacity to spark a curiosity in a way the teacher intended. In the post-lesson interview, Emily even highlighted this as an example of what she saw as “a really good question... (of how) she was... came up with that question because of looking at the photograph” (E2: 13). Overall, the idea of using a visual image at the start to provoke curiosity and open up questions seemed to be one of the distinct positive features of the lesson that the

teacher reflected on at the end; “I did like how at the beginning I got them sitting down, looking at the photograph... and getting them to, you know... thinking of questions” (E2: 8-9).

In a broader sense, all of the teachers, but none of the professional educators, saw working with VHS as a specific ‘skill’ that could be taught. Indeed, the key focus for Simon in his lesson was specifically trying to teach the ‘skills’ required to understand a range of visual sources that were projected onto a screen in the classroom. A comment that seemed revealing was when he spoke of how

we were getting very much into the skills set aspect of it... how we approach it rather than what was actually in the surface of that cartoon... I think that may have been more valuable to them than actually finding out what those cartoons actually meant (S2: 39-42).

He went on further to complement previous comments about some images lending themselves better for this kind of approach than others, hence his choice of working with a cartoon depicting the Night of Long Knives (see Appendix 8.2.8), so that “we can try and dissect some of the stylistic devices and ways in which we break down” (S1: 12-13). This way of thinking about a process for deconstructing visual ‘stylistic devices’ was taken further, and in a slightly different context, by Jeff. On three separate occasions he described a process often used for analysing sources in GCSE History called COP (an acronym for Content, Origin, Purpose). On each occasion he spoke of using this as a way of thinking about VHS specifically. One instance illustrates the others when he spoke of how using ‘COP’ with the front cover of *Private Eye* was effective because

it’s a source that opens itself up quite, just as well to use a standard exam technique like you’d use content, origin, purpose, usefulness, reliability and validity, so we can still use that method to pull the source apart. It works on different levels. It encourages the lower levels to be stretched a bit more (J1: 273-6).

This indicates a perception of how this ‘standard exam technique’ is adaptable to different contexts. Although this wasn’t explored further, the assumption that

students come in 'different levels' and how COP helps stretch 'lower levels' was interesting. Whilst there was a perception of the efficacy of such approaches as 'COP,' there are caveats and critiques that need consideration. Jackson (2012: 22), as an example, puts his critique succinctly in writing about how

teachers, I would insist, must aspire to do more than to turn their students into well-oiled thinking machines... they must consider the 'why' of thinking, not just the 'how.'

Emily took a stance that seemed in some ways to start to act as a bridge between these two positions. Without being wedded to a specific process of analysing VHS, she still spoke about a 'skills approach', but one in which she said; "I'm hoping they start to look at things in a more critical way, instead of just accepting things at face value, especially with images" (E1: 273-4).

A different pedagogical approach that seemed to move towards the 'why' rather than the 'how' came from professional educators, in connection with the concept of students as 'curators,' making 'curatorial decisions.' One aspect of this was what Martha termed 'the hang,' by which she meant

The consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions can be something that young people might be able to engage with... deciding on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who you'd want to give a certain site of the visitor, and what does that mean? (F: 224-7)

Such an approach seems connected to more constructivist approaches to learning with VHS as explored earlier. Soriano (2015), an ex-director of exhibitions at the Royal Academy, has spoken of the position of the curator in this sense in terms of the "role of curator as revealing the meaning... to provide the tools to unlock meaning." Yet this prompts questions: how might the roles of 'curator' and 'student-as-curator' then be described, and to what end? and what might be the 'meaning' that curators intend to unpick? Should not such visual materials be thought of as having meanings in the

plural, and should we not need to consider whose meanings they might be, and how they come to be?

Professional educators also spoke of adopting a thematic approach to gallery curation and education work with schools. In *'The Face of Britain'* exhibition, for instance, the interview revealed the view of how "working in a themed, thematic way... meant that you could see similarities that had happened over time, and realise that portraiture is a vehicle [for this]" (M: 224-5). The *'Take One Picture'* project at the National Gallery explored this further, in the context of a thematic approach to learning with pictures with students, based on the concept of 'changing landscapes'

they saw the painting and they decided that they wanted to make local links to it because the theme, the line of enquiry they were exploring was changing landscapes, because Seurat's *Bathers at Asnieres* is all about changing times from the Industrial Revolution and the impact that had on the landscape of Asnieres, and, um... so what they did was, they thought well how has *our* particular landscape changed, just as Seurat's had changed, because of the Industrial Revolution and trains, and industry, and... erm, they came from a mining town, and realised that basically the pits had closed since the 1980s, their grandparents' and parents' livelihoods had been affected in many significant political ways because of the closure of the pits, and they felt that there was a very strong industrial link between then, historically, and now (F: 306-14).

Such a thematic approach seemed to create a powerful link in this case to create the type of 'authentic' learning experience as earlier discussed, linking a sense of ownership of the enquiry and motivation around it, situated as it was in the space of a 'real' community and the issues it faced in terms of its changing identity.

Within all of these approaches, the role of the educator in framing how VHS are used in the classroom is key. Much of the reference to this was implicit in the interviews and lesson observations, but a couple of times these surfaced into more explicit comments which reflected the pedagogical approach of educators, as well as the position of theorists such as Bullen (2012: 22) in describing the "knowledge that most of us received and are giving is not and is never politically neutral," operating in what Foucault (1972: 131) refers to as 'regimes of truth.' The comment "I think it needs me

not to be the expert but the facilitator, the communicator” (R: 521-2) seemed to be a position that most educators aspired to. Whether it was apparent in practice was perhaps moot, as some of the teachers’ lessons involved elements of didacticism, to the point that on reflection one of them showed an awareness that maybe he had been ‘leading’ students too much.

Finally, some educators identified a number of impediments to effectively teaching with VHS. These mainly coalesced around two beliefs expressed; that of the issue of picture quality, and a related paradigm of ‘choice’ and ‘lack of choice’. An issue expressed by some professional educators was the lack of choice in terms of gallery policy and picture quality. This was apparent in the National Portrait Gallery, which “collects pictures based on the biography of the sitter, not on the quality of the art, and not necessarily on the picture itself” (M: 200-1). This in turn posed problems for education programs where Martha’s comment was “I’m finding it very hard to construct a consistent line of enquiry through the portraits we have because they’re not all necessarily fantastic primary source material” (M: 205-6). Whilst teachers did not explicitly mention this, their comments around some images being more suitable for teaching with than others suggest that image selection can be a problem. Apart from gallery policy, there are other considerations that limit choice. The idea of teaching using portraits, where “it would just be another man in a wig, and we’ve got a lot of them (laughs)” reveals a limitation of a type (M: 187-8). This seemed especially so in Victorian portraiture, where

that is a huge challenge for me at the moment, in the Victorians as well, because they're just men with beards, in a black suit with a black... you know, they've done great social reform, but there's a guy looking like he's thinking, like the other guy who's looking like he's thinking. So I would cherry pick what was readable (M: 192-5).

Allied to this is both descriptions of copyright constrictions, where “there’s loads of interesting material that we don’t have the right to” (M: 151). Classroom teachers provide an interesting counterpoint to this, where, working in public spaces understood in a different sense, images can be used more liberally for localised use,

not for publication. Technology has enhanced this provision. “Thanks to the digital world,” said Emily, “we’ve got so much access to... any different types of evidence” (S1: 111-2). So when Berger (1972: 22) states “because works of art are reproducible, they can theoretically be used by anybody,” the repost seems to be: theoretically, maybe, but practically not. All educators are bounded by the context of the spaces they work within, which in turn may allow different levels of access.



## 6. Conclusions: Descriptions, meanings, implications and reflections

### 6.1 Introduction

This thesis has argued that VHS are highly complex and rich forms of historical data that hold great potential for use in the classroom in terms of encouraging students to engage with History and interrogate its constructed nature. Seemingly paradoxical positions of VHS such as being both *easy-difficult*, *true-false*, or *affective-intellectual* both highlight this complexity as well as signal the possibilities and difficulties they present that require particular kinds of “thinking dispositions” (Perkins, 1996: 90), which in turn echoes the type of “distinctive mode of thinking” (Tosh, 2008: ix-x) that young people can critically apply, that was discussed in chapter 1. Teachers can learn much from innovative pedagogical practices in education spaces such as museums and galleries, such as the use of juxtaposition and the foregrounding of VHS as having agency in their own right.

Yet their capacity to explore such approaches is constrained by the tension between the growing advocacy amongst policymakers of “traditional” as opposed to “New History” (Haydn, 2012: 8) over the last decade in particular, within a broader creep of neo-liberal, managerialism that has underpinned education in England since in the 1980s. In turn this study takes a position, as outlined in the Introduction, that History education is less about what Schama (2000) pejoratively refers to as “orgies of dates,” and more about the way it is constructed, of how as Reiff (2016: 8-9) has powerfully argued, it has meaning “derived from the way human beings order their experience of it and their aspiration for how it might be better ordered.” This ordering, as Seixas (2000: 21) observes, is set in the context of what the “best story” of the past in the History curriculum is seen to be, a struggle where politically “there is a lot at stake” in terms of identity, cohesion and social purpose, as opposed to seeing school History as “an exercise in disciplined knowledge” (2000: 24) which eschews identity issues in favour of a “deliberative distance” that is suited to the development of “critical citizens.” Whilst they have shaped much of what has been said about History education, both approaches, Seixas suggests, “fall short” (2000: 26), as does even his

“third,” postmodern orientation. This study seeks to appreciate the insights each of these approaches brings, whilst acknowledging their issues.

Further, whilst this study embraces a constructivist approach to understanding History, and VHS in particular, there have been recent challenges to this that need to be acknowledged (Hirsch, 1988; Christodoulou, 2014). Yet constructivist approaches that are conflated with ‘an unguided or minimally guided environment’ (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006: 75), or Christodoulou’s labelling of ‘myths’ statements such as ‘teaching knowledge is indoctrination,’ (2014: 109) seem harsh and lacking nuance. Further, Hirsch’s position that improving attainment ‘will depend far less on our methods of instruction... than on the specific contents of our school curriculum’ (1983: 159) gained particular traction during Gove’s tenure as Secretary of State for Education (2010-14), ensuring such positions have strong political resonances too.

This final section is structured in four parts; the first three focus back on the three subsidiary research questions that inform the main research question, *‘How do students, teachers and education professionals experience visual sources in the teaching and learning of History?’*, followed by a reflexive analysis on some aspects of the research process.

In focusing on the subsidiary questions of his study I will first summarise some of the main ways the data describes the experience of working with VHS. This will not be exhaustive, but instead focus on seven key descriptions emerging from the data that may be seen as a form of ‘new knowledge’ in the field. Within each of these themes, some of the most salient nuances will be noted, as either between different types of participants, or across different genres of visual media. Secondly, this data will be analysed in theoretical contexts; primarily how the work of theorists such as Massey (2005), Mitchell (1994), Hall (1990) and Foucault (1972) each offer different ways of seeing the data that adds something to the ways in which it can be understood. It should be stressed at this point that whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to examine in-depth the contexts in which such theorists were working, it is nevertheless

important to acknowledge that the contexts are different and that I am selectively using specific aspects of their thinking as can be applied to VHS. Finally, there will be a summary of the implications of this study for teachers and education professionals. This will have a mainly pragmatic emphasis, in terms of linking what the main findings are to how they may inform pedagogical practice when working with VHS in educational spaces. In this, it is acknowledged that any attempts to universalise from this limited data sample must be tightly bounded; not only due to the limited size and representativeness of the data sample, but also in an effort to “leave behind” what has been seen to be “the tendency toward a totalising master narrative” (Mitchell, 1994: 22) in the theorisation of the visual. Nevertheless, the data can be seen as a starting point; the first suggested steps and glimpses of ways forward in understanding the unique properties of VHS in teaching History. Finally, there is a brief reflection on the fluidity and subjective nature of my own position as a researcher, and some of the iterative ways in which my own conceptual understanding both of research methodology and substantive knowledge of VHS has developed.

## **6.2 How can the experiences of students, teachers and education professionals using visual historical sources in the teaching of History be described?**

Seven themes emerged from the data that describe experiences of working with VHS. These themes were informed to varying degrees by participants in describing their experience of working with VHS: issues of access and engagement; ways of seeing, how VHS ‘work’; the interpretation of VHS; truth-claims; intertextuality; and pedagogical implications. While broad themes were treated discretely for the purposes of analysis, at times there was significant overlapping between themes, which ultimately should not be seen as discrete so much as informing and shaping each other. For instance, comments around engagement are not intended to be seen as isolated from those around pedagogical approaches; students talking of VHS as requiring effort, “of actually thinking about it and engaging with it” (SFE: 34) has implications for the way educators think about this should be done. This is not to go so far as forming the sorts of coherence theories that Williams (2001: 117) describes as

being “radically holistic,” but rather in the spirit that attempting to see the data in holistic terms where possible may be enriching.

Within each of these seven themes, certain descriptions, at times complementary, at others contradictory, emerge. When participants spoke about access and engagement, for instance, both teachers and students in particular spoke of how using VHS made learning about History “easier” in terms of understanding and analysis, a conception that played out in a variety of ways. Although both groups also identified difficulties in working with VHS, predominantly around the need for context, this was not necessarily seen as a negative quality, with one student stating that unlike text, working with VHS was more “fun” as it required “actually thinking about it and engaging with it” (SFE: 47). The term “high impact” that Jeff used that seemed to summarise a quality that many participants felt VHS contained, such as being “eye-catching” (J1: 160) and “attention-grabbing” (SFJ: 66). There was also a sense of inclusivity that all three groups of participants referred to, whether it was in terms of supporting students who were dyslexic (SFJ: 65), migrants (M: 245), or those perceived to have “different learning styles” (F: 92).

In terms of how VHS are viewed, all educators seemed to agree that more time needed to be given for students to engage in “close looking” (R: 165) to allow students to “dissect” (S2: 109) images. Two other notable descriptions of the way images were seen included a sense of how they are a “succinct” (S1) form of visual shorthand that unlike text seemed to allow everything to be seen instantaneously (SFJ: 66-7), as well as the affective domain of seeing, where both students and professional educators referred to a sense of personalisation apparent in the visual in contrast to text (F: 228; SFE: 33-4). An interesting difference between participants, however, came in the way the properties of VHS were understood in terms of agency. Observations such as how a VHS is “not just a window onto it, but it actually makes history,” (M: 350) were prevalent, but were missing from teacher and students’ descriptions. All three groups of participants referred at some point to the ambiguity of symbolism within VHS, of the “difficulty” (S1: 207) this poses for interpretation, though there were implicit references to how a sense of being “confused” (SFE: 162) by this might be overcome

by providing context at some point. Teachers also spoke of working with VHS as providing a set of “skills” that could be used “outside of school as well” (E1: 272), though what these were, was mostly left vague.

Amongst students there were conflicting positions and confusion over the types of truth-claims VHS provided. Whilst students in one focus groups seemed to accept the idea, in terms of photography, that “you can’t really argue with a picture (because)... it’s actually happened” (SFJ: 109), others in a different focus group seemed more sceptical; “it could be staged or something” (SFE: 74) summarised a number of comments made that were more circumspect. Even within the same focus group (SFS) there seemed to be divergence, with one preferring text “if you’re looking for factual information,” (SFS: 67), whilst another asserted that an image “gives you... things that are facts” (SFS: 72-3). The holding here of contradictory positions could reflect social and cultural narratives over the provenance of the visual and textual in society; additional questioning may have interrogated this further.

Educators saw VHS as an opportunity for students to understand how different historical periods visualised each other, of “how people saw their world, and this is how we’re seeing how they’re seeing as well” (S1: 129-30), which would help guard against presentism, though this wasn’t articulated by students. There was also a sense amongst students and professional educators, but not teachers, that there should be a significant degree of freedom and autonomy in how VHS could be interpreted. Different student focus groups spoke of how VHS allowed you “to interpret in your way” (SFS: 103-4), which was reinforced by professional educator comments that stressed the importance of having “your own voice” (F: 557). There was little explicit challenge to this dominant view.

In issues of intertextuality there was an interesting discrepancy between professional educators and teachers. Teachers seemed to speak of ways in which intertextual approaches could be used in self-confirmatory ways. Two different teachers spoke of how different sources could help “reinforce” (E1: 147; TC3: 130-1) each other, and of how when working with a VHS and another source they could “marry the two

together” (E1: 142). This contrasted with professional educators who spoke of how “different juxtapositions” could provoke “different conversations” (M: 340) and of how, in gallery spaces, the dissonance between images can be “when the dialogue begins” (M: 316).

Finally, when participants spoke of pedagogical approaches, they all spoke of, and to differing degrees demonstrated, constructivist and for some an explicitly socially constructivist pedagogy, reflecting a layered approach to constructing hypotheses and revealing context at different stages. Amongst gallery educators, this was seen as especially powerful when an enquiry approach was used that was described as “authentic,” as it involved “a decision that happens in the world” (M: 419-20). Educators spoke of the importance of questioning with VHS, both in terms of VHS as stimuli for generating student questions, and as an opportunity for educators to use a “thread” (R: 49-50) of questioning to “tease it out of them” (J1: 338). Within this, there seemed some divergence between approaches, primarily teachers seemed to emphasise a more “routine” (J1: 251) form of analysis of VHS with specific outcomes in mind, whereas professional educators tended to emphasise a more open-ended approach where “there’s no concrete outcome” (M: 476-7). It should also be noted that teachers explicitly commented at times that they used VHS for their impact in promoting strong levels of student engagement per se, and not necessarily for deconstruction all the time.

### **6.3 How can these descriptions be understood?**

Firstly, as the analysis of data has shown, descriptions of perceptions of VHS often play out along interpretive axes that are at times steeped in seeming paradox and irony. Some of these axes that emerge from the data include: *easy-difficult; immediate-distant; clear-opaque; like text-not like text; non-threatening-threatening; needing context-not needing context; true-false; affective-intellectual; reflects History-is History*. There are several issues such binary positions suggest: To what extent are such axes coherent? Can apparently opposite positions in an axis be held concurrently? To what extent are they acknowledged and incorporated into pedagogical practice? And, to what extent do such axes invite disruption, calling to be dismantled and rethought?

If all these axes reflect students' descriptions of their experiences, then it is proposed that clarifying how they thought about and understood by students is a step towards being able to develop suitable pedagogical responses.

To clarify a response to some of these issues I will refer to two diagrams in the Appendix (8.12.1 and 8.12.2), included here to illustrate how my own conceptual understanding of how experiences of VHS has developed over time. Figure 6.1 shows a scheme for thinking about VHS that was developed in 2015, the second year of this study. In contrast, Figure 6.2 shows how this thinking has changed over the following two years, as the main research data has been gathered and analysed, and considered in light of reading further theoretical positions.

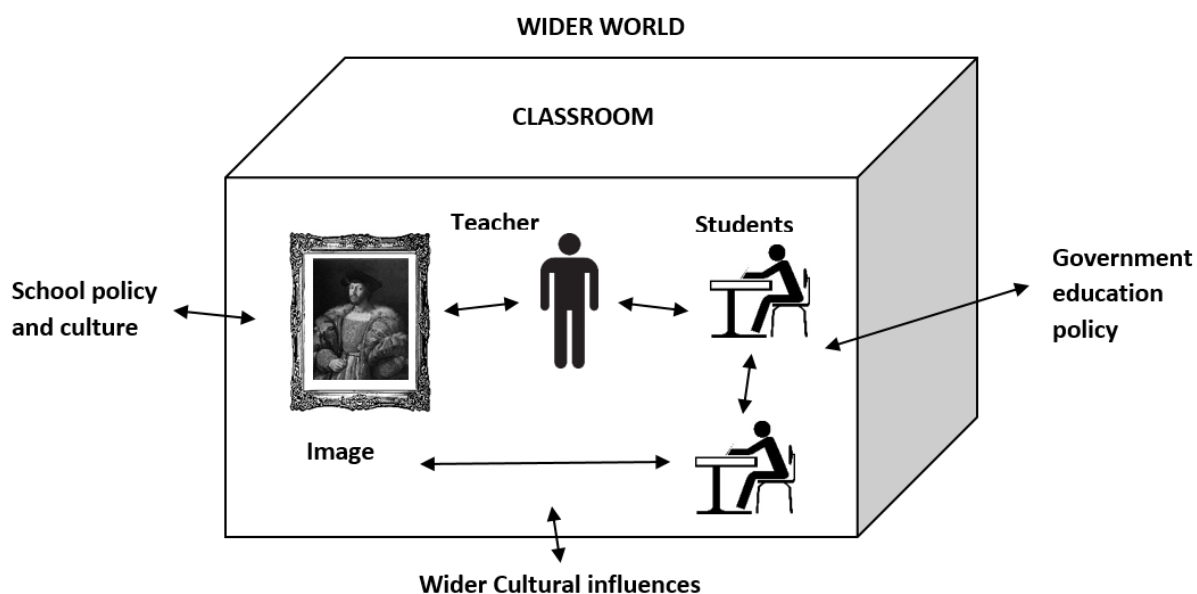


Figure 6.1: A conceptualisation of how VHS work, created in 2015 (Appendix 8.12.1)

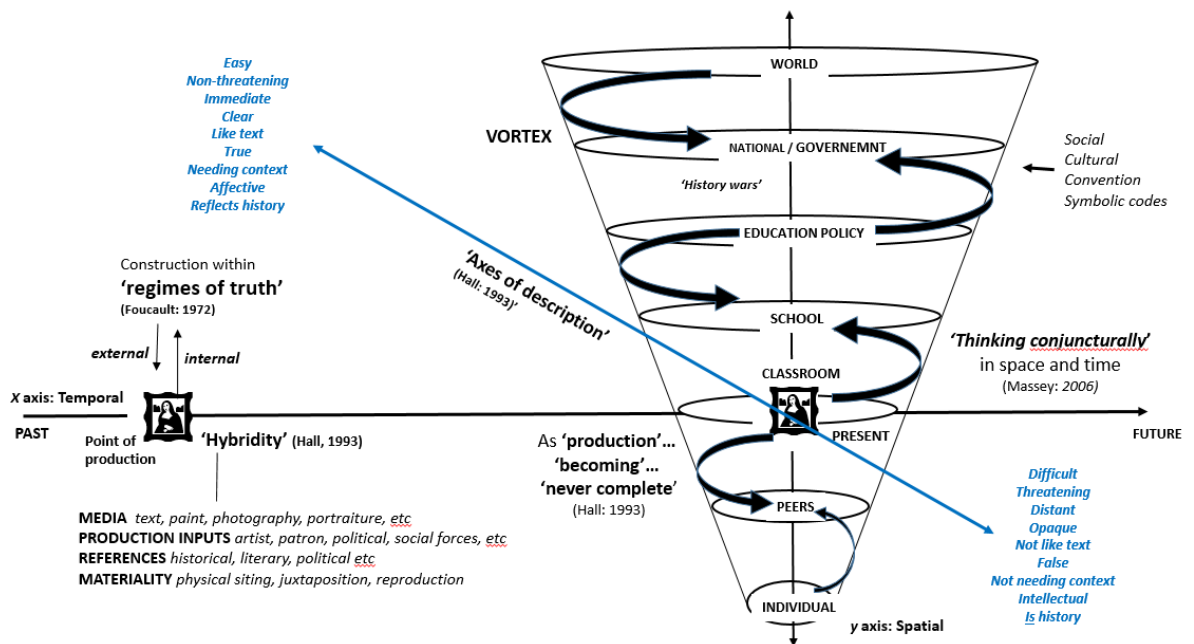


Figure 6.2 A conceptualisation of how VHS work, created in 2017 (see Appendix 8.12.2)

(start #1) Figure 6.2 illustrates the emergence of my own tentative hybrid theorisation of how VHS can be understood as operating not just in the world, but in the History classroom in particular. This theorisation is seen as hybrid in a dual sense: both in terms of seeing VHS as dynamic, hybrid entities, as well as the conceptualisation of VHS itself as bringing together at times seemingly disparate theorists such as Hall (1993), Foucault (1972) and Massey (2006).

This visualisation 6.2 is constructed around two axes: the x axis donating a temporal dynamic, and the y axis denoting a spatial conceptualisation. Along the x axis VHS are first considered at their point of production. At this moment it is argued they need to be considered in the context of Foucault's notion of 'regimes of truth,' a consideration of the hegemonic systems within which they are understood and framed. Not only does this include thinking about how such 'regimes of truth' impact on the production of VHS, but also how internally VHS articulate such regimes in their visual representations. Further, it is argued that VHS at their point of production have an inherent hybridity that is constituted by four main paradigms: their form of media and genre, and the ways in which forms such as text, painting, photography and portraiture might both constitute VHS and inform and relate to each other in doing so; the hybrid



forms of production inputs that constitute VHS, be they the influences of a patron, the artist herself, the audience, and attendant social, political and financial influences; the ways in which multiple, hybrid references can combine in VHS, be they historical, mythical, literary or political; and finally the hybrid forms that VHS can take in their materiality, in terms of the space of their physical siting, their juxtaposition with other VHS within this space, and within notions of the reproduction of VHS and its attendant implications. All of these four factors, it is argued here, need to be understood in terms of VHS as being constantly thought of as being in production through time, of VHS as continually 'becoming' and 'never complete' (Hall, 1993).

The y axis in Figure 6.2 denotes a spatial way of understanding VHS that is adapted from the thinking of Massey (2006) who uses the concept of 'thinking conjuncturally,' of shuttling between different spatial lenses, or ways in which VHS can be understood. From the top of the diagram, these lenses are understood in terms of the world, the nation and the social and cultural codes existing within it, the government, the education policy, the school, the classroom, the peer group and teacher, and ultimately the individual subject. These are not seen as discrete lenses, but rather as a vortex to help think about the dynamic way in which these forces constantly inform and shape each other in multiple ways.

An aspect of how my understanding of the dynamics of VHS as they are experienced in the classroom has developed is shown in the concept of 'axes of description' in Diagram 6.2. Earlier I outlined the debate around Aristotle's "law of contradiction" (Aristotle, 2001: 26), of how an image cannot, or maybe can, as Wittgenstein argued with his duck/rabbit notion of hybridity, hold different positions simultaneously. It is argued here that it is problematic to produce a single explanatory response to this. The extent to which, for instance, an image can be both *immediate-distant* or *true-false* in the axes shown in Figure 6.2 will depend on contextual factors which, when sutured together will start to form a specifically local context that seems to lack capacity to be universalisable. Factors such as the form and content of the image, the intention of the artist, the viewer, the context of viewing, the impact of patronage, the purpose of the image in its production, its contexts, all impact on the way VHS can be understood. In turn, this leads to a sense of images as localised points of crystallisation of meaning in which binary positions may constitute one surface reading among many.

Another way of understanding the axes which run through constructions of VHS is through the work of Hall (1990) and his theorising of concepts of identity. It is important to emphasise at this point that Hall's theory around identity is not being used in exactly the context he meant it, as an expression of cultural identity in a postmodern context. It seems here that whilst not completely analogous, thinking of VHS as possessing an 'identity' in the terms he describes, can be fruitful. When, for instance, Hall (1990: 51) observes that

identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation,

the parallels with VHS and how their identity may be understood seem striking. The idea of VHS lacking a fixity of meaning and interpretation, for instance, is identified in theorising about visual art by Wolff (1993: 103), who talks of how

I have argued that the recovery of any 'original' meaning is, at least in practice, not possible, and that the way in which we understand... paintings is a function of our own position, and therefore changes from one period to another and one viewpoint to another.

Yet whilst both Wolff and Hall hint at it, in terms of how VHS are experienced in the classroom there are some specifically localised factors that shape an understanding of VHS; the identity, experiences and understandings students bring with them and how these are shaped through dialogue with their peers and the teacher. It could be argued here that a complementary way of understanding VHS is through the work of Massey (2005: 141) and her exploration of the concept of "thinking conjuncturally" which she suggests is a process of

a shuttling back and forth between different temporal frames or scales to capture the distinctive character of processes which appear to inhabit the "same" moment in time.

This starts to make sense in terms of VHS being seen as a 'space' in which understandings can zoom in and out, as shown in Figure 6.2 as a 'vortex,' from the specifically local to the school context, to the broader political and cultural context.

Hall's (1990: 52) second notion of 'cultural identity' also mirrors an understanding of VHS as one which "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as well as the past." In this sense, VHS may be seen as a thread or strand, being constantly pulled by different forces. Such fluidity and incompleteness of VHS may run against the grain of pedagogical practices that respond to curriculum and exam syllabus demands, tending to see VHS more as having a fixity of meaning, where specific interpretations are rewarded, whilst others are not.

Two further aspects of Hall's (1990: 54) thinking may be instructive here. One is his emphasis on the idea that such axes as *easy-difficult* and *immediate-distant* as described in the data should be understood in ways other than binary opposites. He describes, for instance, how

cultural 'play' could not therefore be represented... as a simple, binary opposition – 'past/present', 'them/us'. Its complexity exceeds this binary structure of representation. At different places, times, in relation to different questions, the boundaries are re-sited. They become, not only... mutually excluding categories, but also what they sometimes are – differential points along a sliding scale.

So, seeing such descriptions as axes rather than binary positions seems a richer way of understanding the interpretive process that students experience. A second way in which Hall's theorising may help in thinking about how VHS are experienced is through his description of the concept of 'hybridity,' also shown in Figure 6.2. Following a discussion of Derrida's (2006: 5) concept of 'difference / *différance*,' Hall (1990: 58) goes on to see cultural identity as defined "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*." Thinking of VHS as hybrid spaces of knowledge production seems to be a productive way of understanding them, one in which approaches such as that of Card's (2008) 'double

vision,' Jaffee's (2006) intertextuality and Desai, Hamlin & Mattson's (2010) juxtapositioning seem to be able to align. The property of hybridity also seems to sit within Mitchell's (1994: 94-5) argument that

all arts are 'composite arts' (both text and image); all media are mixed media, combining different codes, discursive conventions, channels, sensory and cognitive modes.

This position also affords another way of viewing and understanding the *like text-not like text* axis identified in the research. Such hybridity, though, should be understood not as a full stop, an end in itself, but rather as a way of seeing and thinking about VHS that helps to describe rather than explain.

Foucault's concept of a "regime of truth" is also instructive in thinking about the way VHS are positioned in society, and how such a framing is inherently political. When Foucault (1972: 131) asserts that "each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true," I would argue that the ways this operates in the case of VHS can be seen in a bifocal sense; both in the external way on which regimes of truth operate in the classroom and beyond when interpreting visual sources, and internally in the way in which regimes of truth are displayed within the limits of the picture itself, as illustrated in Figure 6.2.

Such 'regimes of truth' are performed in the sphere of external curriculum demands; specifically in this investigation the demands of KS4 GCSE exam syllabuses and mark schemes and the KS3 National Curriculum. The argument here is that exam boards appear to take inconsistent and at times contradictory positions over the provenance of VHS, which in turn informs the place VHS take in the teaching of History in the classroom. Two of the three lessons observed in this study were with GCSE History exam classes (Jeff's and Simon's) whilst the other was a Year 9 class. The demands of GCSE History exam boards in terms of how VHS are used appear highly inconsistent. Both the Year 10 GCSE classes were studying the unit 'South Africa, 1960-94: The People and the State.' This was a new syllabus that was being taught for the first time

and it was notable that all the sources in the sample exam paper were text-based. The use of VHS seems to have been marginalised here to the point of extinction. Yet this was not the case for all exam boards. Whilst a systematic analysis of different exam boards is not intended here, it is yet interesting to use the AQA exam syllabus as a counterpoint to OCR in terms of the provenance given to VHS. The AQA GCSE History (Specification A) seems the opposite of OCR in terms of its use of the visual. Unit 1, option B, 'Media and Mass Communication Through Time' includes a sources booklet with four associated questions (see Appendix 8.4 and 8.5). Interestingly, all the sources are forms of VHS, though it is notable that source C in particular, two front covers of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' (Figure 6.3) are instances of Mitchell's argument that such sources have an inherent hybridity in terms of artistic form.

Whilst the contrast between OCR and AQA is stark, it is also informative to see what the mark scheme for AQA requires students to *do* with visual sources in the exam; select detail, draw inference, compare, and identify attitudes based on changes over time, place or author. Whilst in a broad sense this seems to be mining VHS for information in a way that sees historical knowledge as more "fixed and inert" (Foster et al, 2016: 101) rather than seeing them as problematic and socially-constructed, or as illustrative rather than with agency in their own right, it yet seems remarkable that

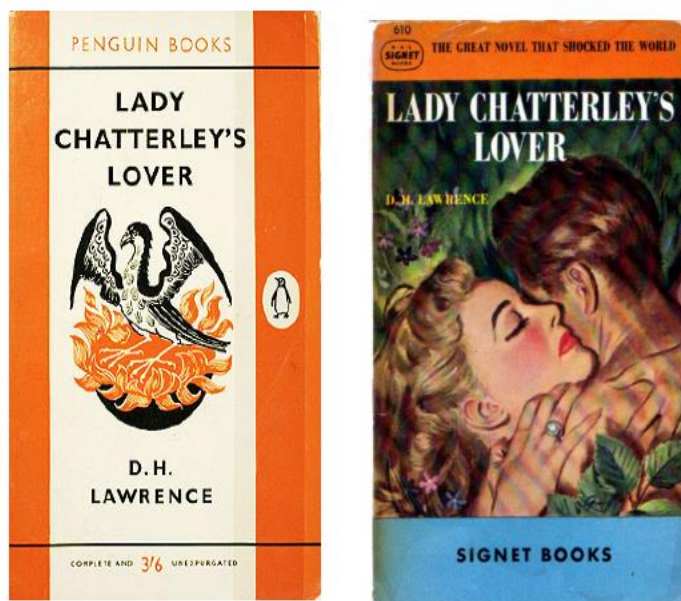


Figure 6.3: Example of visual sources used from the AQA GCSE History specimen paper *Media and Mass Communication Through Time* published online in 2017. (Appendix 8.4)

a GCSE syllabus should place such an emphasis on VHS at all, to the exclusion of mostly textual sources. It is also of note that, like OCR at GCSE level, no A-level History

syllabuses contained any explicit reference to VHS. All this seems to reflect conflicting 'discourses of truth' around the provenance, or lack of, accorded to VHS in terms of the tension between the authority that visual as opposed to textual sources have in the study of History.

In terms of the National Curriculum there seems more latitude for using VHS, yet little guidance. The closest reference to VHS at KS3 (DfE, 2013) is in the comment that "they (pupils) should understand how different types of historical sources are used rigorously to make historical claims." Yet there are no suggestions of how these 'different types' may be understood as operating in different ways, or pedagogical guidance for teachers in using them. Instead, the KS3 curriculum (DfE, 2013) is inflected throughout with statements of substantive historical knowledge that "students should be taught about." In terms of teaching with VHS this may liberate yet also constrain. In this research there was limited mention of the curriculum amongst teachers: Simon mentioned time constraints in the curriculum, where

we don't have enough curriculum time any more to go through lots of in-depth stuff about people's thoughts, people's feelings and attitudes in a particular period of time (S1: 210-212).

However, this was as far as was mentioned. The context of the recent "History wars" outlined earlier is relevant here, enacted primarily between policymakers, History teacher educators, teachers, academics and the media in England over what is seen by some as a content-heavy curriculum, amongst other issues. The gap between policy and practice seemed largely unspoken. It should also be noted that education professionals gave little reference to curriculum guidelines and exam specifications, hinting at the idea that galleries and museums may be seen as alternative spaces for learning, less constrained by external curriculum dictates, though not entirely free of internal political tensions.

#### **6.4 What implications for teacher pedagogy can be drawn from this study?**

The study of VHS is clearly a broad church, encompassing as it does a variety of interrelated disciplines. While this has numerous implications, this section is

purposively selective in focusing on seven pragmatic considerations for teacher pedagogy that are emergent from the data.

#### **6.4.1 “*That would be... madness*”: using VHS in isolation and context**

There needs to be a consideration of the relationship between VHS and the context in which they are situated. If, as Jeff said when using a source about apartheid in South Africa with a class that had never studied the subject, “that would be, you know, madness” (J1: 334), the questions centre around the point at which context should be introduced with VHS, by whom, how and to what purpose. This research highlights that both teachers and students interviewed called for a constructivist pedagogy. A comment from the student focus group encapsulated what educators also articulated in saying

I think they should let us analyse it first, then ask us what we’ve thought about it, and then give us a bit of information... and look at how it changes our interpretation of it (SFE: 182-4).

This is not to say such an approach is not without its critics. Card (2008), for one, argues “pupils need... plenty of contextual knowledge *before* looking” [emphasis added]. It is also important not to decontextualize specific localised experiences of working with VHS; the nature of the source, the knowledge students bring with them, the context of the students themselves in terms of their identities and experiences, the political contexts within which learning experiences occur, as well as the spatial domains, be they in a classroom or gallery. All such factors may mediate how a constructivist approach is understood and undertaken. Yet it is of note that voices from the research seemed fairly unified in expressing need for context, but one which is layered-in rather than immediately apparent.

#### **6.4.2 “*Things might get lost*”: Dealing with the ambiguity of symbolism**

Anxiety over symbolic interpretation was expressed by Martha’s comment that “symbols may have different meanings, and things might get lost...” (M: 95). There needs to be an awareness amongst educators, therefore, not only of how but when students are given the interpretive tools, in terms of a cultural, iconographical

knowledge, with which to assign meaning to symbols that avoids accusations of presentism and help to navigate a way through an interpretive process that acknowledges both symbolic ambiguity and yet the reasonable claims and inferences that may be made. Within this research, the preference of educators for more open, non-determined or closed, pre-determined readings of symbolism seemed contextually dependent, reflecting in part the contrast between educators and contexts where a relativist ‘anything goes’ approach was adopted, as opposed to those where symbolic references were more fixed. It is argued here that issues surrounding symbolic interpretation may be problematic, reflecting issues in the theoretical work of structuralist semiotics, it is nevertheless a potentially rewarding pursuit, allowing students to approach a richer interpretive analysis that develops an appreciation of the social and cultural forces in which symbolic representations and meaning are embedded. Pedagogically it may be that, as Simon suggests, “you have to teach the symbolism first, or the attitudes before showing visual aids, because they won’t get it” (S1: 214-5). Or alternatively, in keeping with the constructivist spirit, a layering of information may be preferable, highlighting the disparity and fluidity between present cultural codes and those of the past.

#### **6.4.3 “You’ve got everyone on there”: How the visual is like-not like text**

The idea that “you’ve got everyone on there” (SFJ: 66-7) expresses an important distinction between text and image, reflecting a broader argument made here that with a sense of the similarities and differences between the ways both text and image ‘work’ and can be understood, teachers will be better equipped to tailor appropriate pedagogical tools to support the interpretation of VHS. VHS are described as providing an immediate, holistic way of understanding information, unlike text, where with “words, you’re stuck to a certain guideline,” (SFJ: 67-8) requiring a predominantly linear interpretation. Foucault (1970: 90-1) described this quality of text as being unable to “represent thought, instantly, in its totality,” unlike visual representations. This has implications for how teachers might help structure student interpretation of VHS, be it eliciting “first impressions,” identifying individual elements and seeing how they relate to each other, or scanning in a systematic way from side to side of the picture (Card, 2008: 38). The data showed there was also an apparent difference in



attitudinal perception between the text and the visual. Whereas comments were made about a “big wall of text” (J1: 291) as being off-putting, images were often described as “less daunting” (SFE: 57). Although this played out in different ways in the research, the prevalence of such descriptions should encourage teachers to use VHS not just as a means of initial engagement, but as a central component of lessons. In terms of pedagogical practice then, inherently VHS tend towards non-linear, more holistic atemporal ways of ‘reading’ visual sources which educators need to be aware of in developing a language and a pedagogy for using VHS which goes beyond treating them the same as text and towards an appreciation of how the spatiality of VHS requires different ways of constructing meaning.

#### **6.4.4 “*You can’t really argue with a picture*”: Critical visual literacy in a ‘post-truth’ world**

Descriptions of how students understand the truth-claims made by images appear confused and contradictory, though in part this can be attributed to different forms of visual media which speak in different ways to students. Teaching effectively with VHS involves in part, then, appreciating the nuances between different forms of visual media, and how these might be perceived by an audience. The idea, for example, that “you can’t really argue with a picture” (SFJ: 114) and that “it makes it more literal... it’s actually a real event” (SFJ: 109) refers specifically to a photograph, whereas comments about a “painting or a picture” revealed that they “might show someone in a certain way” (SFS: 89-90). However, amongst other students there was a sense that “a lot of photos could be used for... propaganda” (SFE: 80). This mixed image is compounded by some students who seemed to think that images provide “facts,” (SFS: 73) while others suggest this is rather the provenance of text (SFS: 67-8). The implication for teachers here is to encourage students to see both image, text and any other source as essentially constructed, where the task of historians is to look behind the curtain of such construction and reveal the workings, the values and intentions, in which such constructions are constituted. This may be understood in terms of a developmental schema in which students demonstrate an ability to interpret VHS with increasing levels of complexity, nuance and discrimination, which might also be seen in the context of Seixas’s description of a history education as “disciplined knowledge,”

allowing students the ability to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of different interpretations (2000: 25). Yet in pedagogical practice, as Lee (1983: 28) notes, where “a discussion of historical skills and procedures has tended to proceed as if merely technical questions are at issue” should maybe be avoided.

It is argued there that educators need to be aware of the potential tendency for a strong association among many students hold with VHS as being in some way objective and “truthful,” as “more real,” and as giving “facts.” Educators also need to consider three factors that mitigate against this. Firstly, that the data shows that such claims are more associated with certain genres of visual sources, especially photography. Secondly, that some students did have an awareness of techniques such as Photoshop that can distort images. There is a strong need here for students to recognise and understand issues of framing and photo-shopping, and that photographs in particular do not always tell the truth. Thirdly, it should be noted that the data showed some students did have some idea of how manipulation happens with VHS, but as the response was generally mixed, with a significant number lacking capacity to look at pictures critically, suggests it is area that needs to be explicitly addressed in the classroom.

#### **6.4.5 “*Different conversations*”: Juxtaposition as an intertextual approach**

“When the dialogue begins,” (M: 316) refers to the Martha’s perception that juxtaposing images in a gallery can provoke critical reflections about images that might otherwise be seen as more passive. This seems a ripe area where practice in gallery spaces opens up possibilities for teacher pedagogy in school classroom spaces. Hanging pictures in different juxtapositions, as in *The Face of Britain* exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery, is described as having allowed “pictures talking across time, instead of sort of sitting next to each other” (M: 312-5). Desai, Hamlin and Mattson (2010: 4) refer to how such juxtapositions enable the asking of “difficult questions... audiences are provoked into questioning not only how history is represented but how it is obscured.” The way in which visual meanings are capable of altering depending on what appears before or after them seems a relatively unexplored potential for classroom pedagogy, where issues around curatorial choices can have relevance in

spaces outside of galleries. Juxtapositions in terms of time, theme and space can create dissonances that invite interrogation and explanation in way that nurtures both inquisitive and robust critical thinking. This could be seen as a broader ‘pedagogy of curation’ and ‘pedagogy of authenticity’ as described in Chapter 5.7.2.

In a broader sense, the data shows teachers stress the need for “other sources” to get ‘a full picture’ when using a single visual source, but less about how they might inform each other, or the pedagogical implications of this. Teachers often saw other sources as a means of reinforcing interpretations of VHS, rather than interrogating them. Secondly, the data shows professional educators embrace intertextuality more, especially in juxtapositions which ‘added another level’ as pictures develop a dialogic relationship with each other as opposed to more traditional, chronological sequencing. How this changes the meaning of an image, and to what ends, can be a powerful educational tool.

#### **6.4.6 “How people saw their world”: VHS as two-way mirror**

When Simon described VHS as having bifocal properties, in the sense of “this is how people saw this world, and this is how we’re seeing how they’re seeing as well,” (E1: 129-30) it seems that VHS have at once both a transparent and reflective quality, something akin to a two-way mirror. This is a rethinking and extension of concepts such as ‘the period eye’ (Mitchell, 1994) and the metaphor of ‘double vision’ (Card, 2008), of how one period visualises another: whilst Card’s metaphor hints at an unspecified blurriness of vision, and inability to see, what is being described here is maybe blurred, but is also a simultaneous view of the past and reciprocal reflection of the present that inform each other, allowing viewing from the present but not the past. This seems a potentially rich way of using VHS in educational spaces in moving beyond VHS as being illustrative of the past, or of a particular conception of the past framed in time, and towards a more reflective sense of how such pasts are also constructed in the present (Terdiman, 1993: 7), of how the study of the History is as much about the present as it is the past. Further, VHS can be used to make explicit the concept of ‘double vision’ for students in the classroom, to counter the dangers inherent in presentism in their attempts to reconstruct the past.

#### **6.4.7 “Shaping history”: VHS as having agency**

Images need to be understood as having agency, as “world-making” and not just reflective or illustrative of History. In the classroom VHS need to be seen as having agency in its own right, a contextual property that professional educators stressed, but which was not evident in the data that came from schools. Agency here is understood as Martha described, in terms of how VHS “is not just a window onto it, but it actually makes history” (M: 349-50). This sense of agency can be understood as manifesting itself in different ways, such as the idea that it is a property of “portraiture in particular” (M: 361-2) where “key portraits... have shaped history, and have made power by posing for an image of themselves” (M: 201-3). In many ways this helps students think about History in terms of how, as Jenkins (2003: 20) describes

History is never of itself; it is always for someone,” where “History is basically a contested discourse, an embattled terrain wherein people(s), classes and groups autobiographically construct interpretations of the past literally to please themselves.

It is this particular property of VHS that, when used in certain contexts and ways, has the power, as Freya has described in the *Take One Picture* program at the National Gallery, in that it “not only transforms school children, it transforms school communities” (F: 371-2).

### **6.5 Reflexive contexts**

Creswell (2013: 216) defines reflexivity as the concept “in which the writer is conscious of the biases, values and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study.” This study adopts his bipartite approach of firstly talking about my “experiences with the phenomenon being explored,” and then discussing how these have shaped my “interpretation of the phenomenon” (2013: 216).

Firstly, in accounting for how in the process of this study I have been “inevitably and inextricably implicated in the data generation” (Mason, 2007: 149), an acknowledgement is made of how my position as researcher has considerably changed as the study has progressed. In the first year of this study I saw myself as a researcher-

practitioner, working as a Director of Learning and teacher of History in a secondary, state comprehensive school in West Sussex, which then involved in the second year of this study as contributing part-time as an Associate Fellow in the History ITE program at the University of Sussex. During the first two years, then, I was working within the school in which I intended to conduct this research, as well as starting to work with trainee teachers in the locality, which exposed me further to elements of student practice with VHS. A more fundamental shift occurred in the third year of this study when I left my school to work in teacher education in the Centre for Holocaust Education at UCL. This meant my own position had changed, from one of practitioner-researcher in the place of research, to an outsider-researcher, albeit one still with links and relationships that need accounting for within the school, especially in the collection of data. I was aware, for instance, of the dynamic of being an ex-colleague of all of the teachers during interviews, two of whom I had once line-managed. In one of my teacher interviews I felt the boundaries between interview and friendly, familiar conversation were being blurred, as the interviewee often seemed to slip into a familiar tone that, whilst revealing, was also quite different from the other two. It made me wary that due to our relationship the interview was lapsing into a more informal off-the-record chat rather than adhering to the conventions of semi-structured interviews being audio-recorded.

This investigation has also left me with a series of questions that I wish I had asked, data I would have liked to have collected, and from this, some thoughts about the future direction of research in this field. Originally this was intended to be a piece of mixed-methods research, front-ended with an online survey and explored further by a series of focus groups with students and teacher educators. Such a survey could serve as a staging point for further investigation, for instance around the time students spend on looking at images, what they actually look at, and in what order. Linked to this, eye-tracking research on students looking at historical pictures coming out of Finland at the moment, shows that “it seems the order of the pictures actually affected what they saw in the pictures” (Puurttinen, 2017). It would be interesting to see how qualitative approaches could explore this further, and the implications for teacher pedagogy this may have. Other areas ripe for investigation include: a comparative

study of the development of conceptual knowledge between texts and images; a comparative study of the experience of VHS in other international contexts, both Western and non-Western; a study of the experience of VHS and the domain of memory; a further investigation into the truth claims VHS make in the context of a post-truth world; and a further exploration of how identity, be it on lines of ethnicity, gender, ability, and socio-economic status, plays out in the experience of VHS. All of these are both prescient in the contemporary educational climate, and have potentially significant implications for teacher pedagogy and policymaking.

Over the course of this study, some aspects of my own perspective on education, the teaching of History, and the use of visual sources has changed. This study has been an attempt to navigate a way through Nagel's (1986: 88) view of what he terms as "double vision," where

we have no satisfactory ways of combining... the relation between the beliefs we form about the world, with their aspirations to objectivity, and the admission that the world might be completely different from the way we think it is.

My initial view of what was possible at the start of this investigation was seeped in aspects of positivism, grounded in a school and educational environment where answers to find 'what works' in the classroom within rhetoric of 'best practice' tended to seek instrumentalist solutions to such issues as raising exam attainment, levels of literacy, and student engagement. Over the course of this study I have found I have increasingly questioned such assumptions and practices. Listening to and reading Biesta (2017: 1) for instance, whose central claim that whilst "the teacher matters... the real issue is *how* teaching matters and what teaching matters *for*" has made me reconsider and reposition the role of the teacher and critically interrogate the limits of student-centred learning as an orthodoxy. Working in educational contexts beyond my own school walls has made me reflect on the complex political terrain in which education sits, where not just content but pedagogical approaches are inherently value-laden and considered for a purpose. The use of VHS sits within this, in terms not just of a traditional association of text as being somehow more authoritative and the subsequent marginalisation of the visual to something more illustrative or as

something to be used specifically with SEND students due to its apparent surface simplicity, but also in ways in which it has the potential to interrogate and subvert dominant narratives. I feel this is especially so in the context of, as Mirzoeff (2009: 1) claims, “human experience is now more visual and visualised than ever before.” I sense I have developed a more deep-seated appreciation through this investigation of how VHS can be seen highlighting for students what Jenkins (2003: 79) refers to as

the recognition that interpretations at (say) the “centre” of our culture are not there because they are true or methodologically correct but because they are aligned to the dominant discursive practices: again power/knowledge.

In this, not only do VHS have agency as constituting history of different pasts, but agency in classrooms of the present and the future as well in considering how the past is seen.

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## 9. APPENDICES

### 9.1 VISUAL HISTORICAL SOURCES USED IN PILOT STUDIES

8.1.1 Source used in pilot study: Y.13 Government & Politics 2015 unit 'Governing the USA'



<http://users.humboldt.edu/ogayle/hist110/balancingAct.html>

8.1.2 Source used in pilot study: Y.10 GCSE History 2015 unit on 'South Africa, 1948-94'



*Nelson Mandela: a Life in Cartoons*, edited by Harry Dugmore, Stephen Francis, Rico Schacherl. Claremont, South Africa: David Philip Publishers, 1999.

## 8.2 VISUAL HISTORICAL SOURCES USED / REFERRED TO BY TEACHERS IN LESSON OBSERVATIONS, 2016

VHS used in Lesson Observation of Emily

8.2.1



<http://www.psywarrior.com/AntiSemiticWWII.html>

8.2.2



[http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/prop/ns\\_octopus.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/prop/ns_octopus.html)

8.2.3



<https://uk.pinterest.com/WHShistory/the-effects-of-hyperinflation-in-germany-by-hannah/>



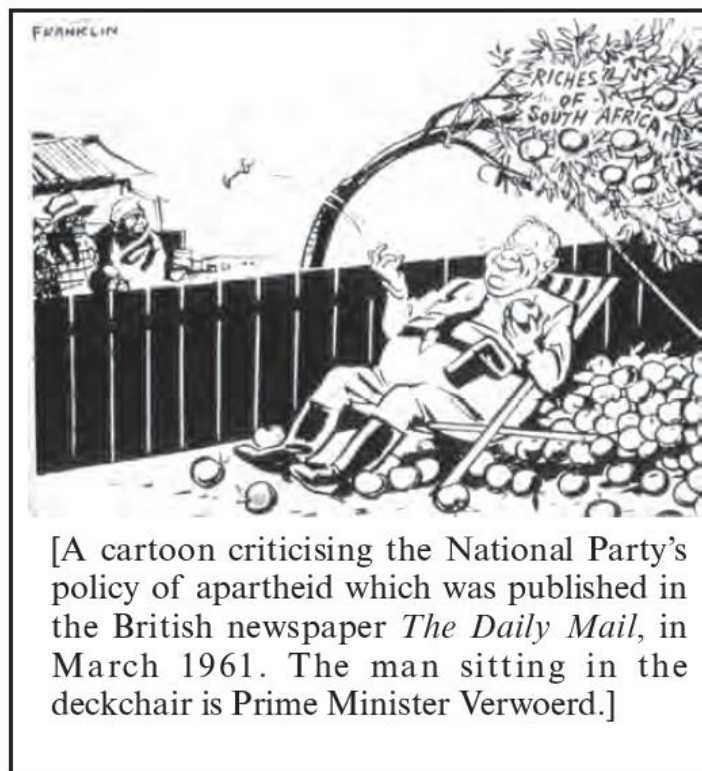
VHS used in Lesson Observation of Jeff

8.2.4



<http://flashbak.com/apartheid-south-africa-in-the-1960s-photos-of-the-black-and-white-years-8966/>

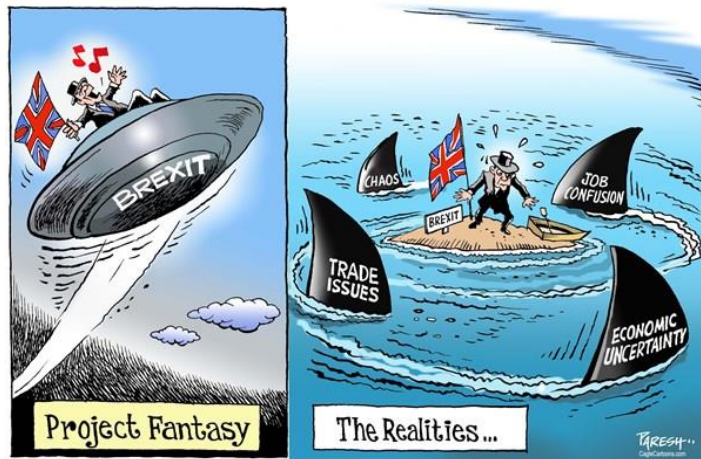
8.2.5



From WJEC GCSE History Exam Paper: 2011  
'South Africa, 1948-94'

## VHS used in Lesson Observation of Simon

8.2.6



<https://www.bigfuture.com.au/blog/h-as-the-collapse-of-communism-made-democracies-lazy/>

8.2.7



<https://uk.pinterest.com/mcewanmorton/guardian-cartoons-alias-steve-hell/>

8.2.8



David Low, 1934  
British Cartoon Archive / University of Kent;  
'They Salute with Both Hands Now' LSE 2086

### 8.3 OTHER SOURCES REFERRED TO IN INTERVIEWS

#### 8.3.1



Fred Wilson - Mine/Yours, 1995  
Whitney Museum of American Art

#### 8.3.2



Fred Wilson - Metalwork, 1995  
Whitney Museum of American Art



## 8.4 AQA GCSE HISTORY SPECIFICATION A SAMPLE SOURCES BOOKLET WITH QUESTIONS (JUNE 2015)

Source A A picture of book burning

This painting is called *The Burning of the Books*, by a Spanish artist, Berruguete. The painting shows the thirteenth century Saint Dominic who preached against the Albigensian heretics in France at that time. Berruguete painted the picture in 1480. In the picture St Dominic's books do not burn but leap out of the fire. Those of the Albigensians are burned by the flames.



Source B continued A Parliamentary drawing made in 1642 of a Royalist soldier.

The soldier is carrying things he has stolen. The title of the picture was *The English Irish Soldier who would rather eat than fight*.



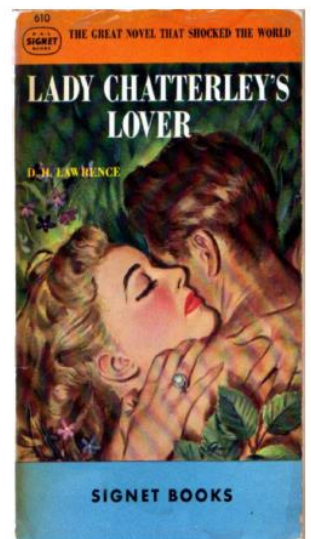
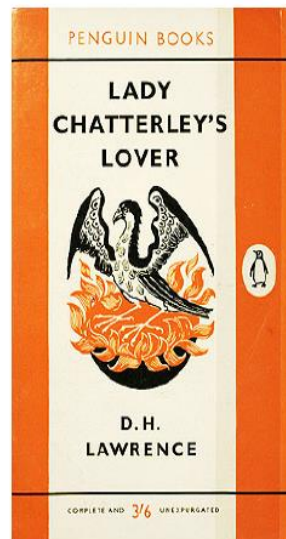
Source B Two of the many pictures published by both sides during the English Civil War era

Oliver Cromwell directs the destruction of the Royal Oak of Britain in this Royalist picture.



Source C Two covers for *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

DH Lawrence's sexually explicit novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was banned in the UK under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act and was first published in Italy in 1928. In 1959 the British government passed a new Obscene Publications Act. Penguin Books tested that law by printing 200000 copies of Lawrence's book for sale. They were prosecuted and the trial attracted great publicity. The prosecution failed. At one point the lawyer acting for the government asked the jury, 'Is it a book you would wish your wife or servants to read?' Within a year *Lady Chatterley's Lover* had sold 2 million copies.



### Questions

- What does **Source A** suggest about control of the media in the Middle Ages? Explain your answer using **Source A** and **your knowledge**. (4)
- What different impression of control of the media is suggested by **Source B**? Explain your answer using **Sources A** and **B** and **your knowledge**. (6)
- Why was control of the media different at these times? (8)
- Study **Source C**. Governments' control of the media has changed at different times for different reasons. Why was this? Explain your answer using the **sources** and **your knowledge**. (8)

## **8.5 DISTILLATION OF REQUIREMENTS OF AQA GCSE HISTORY MARK SCHEME ACCOMPANYING APPENDIX 8.5**

- i) 'Select detail' [q. 1a), b), c)]
- ii) 'Draw an informed inference' [q.1a), b)]
- iii) 'Develop a complex, informed inference' [q.1a)]
- iv) 'Provide a simple comparison based on the detail of both sources' [q.1b)]
- v) 'Draw informed inferences about attitudes based on the detail of both sources' [q.1b) c)]
- vi) 'Answers that say how the sources are different' [q.1c)]
- vii) 'Answers showing simple/developed reasoning about attitudes based on changes over time, place or author' [q.1c)]



## 8.6 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH RATIONALE

### 8.6.1 Student Focus Group

Question	Purpose
What do you think you learned this lesson?	This is to start getting students to remember back to the lesson and reflect in more general terms about what they learned
How were VHS used in the lesson? How helpful were they?	This is now specifically focusing on the teacher-selected VHS, asking students to describe their use and then reflect on their utility.
What value do images such as these have in learning about History?	This is meant in a more general sense, asking students to differentiate between different media sources, and the value of VHS as a discrete medium
Is there any thing that makes the use of such images in the classroom 'difficult'?	To give some balance, I wanted students to reflect on things that might cause problems when looking at VHS, to understand better where they might get 'stuck' when using them
How do teachers use images in History lessons? What are your experiences?	This is intended to go beyond the confines of the specific lesson. Anecdotes may be self-selected here, so there is not a representative cross-section of other History lessons, yet this process is aimed to highlight which instances for them are the most memorable
What could teachers do to help you understand visual images?	Without prejudging responses to the fourth question, this aims to reflect either on specific examples of practice they have found helpful, or to hypothesise about what they might find helpful

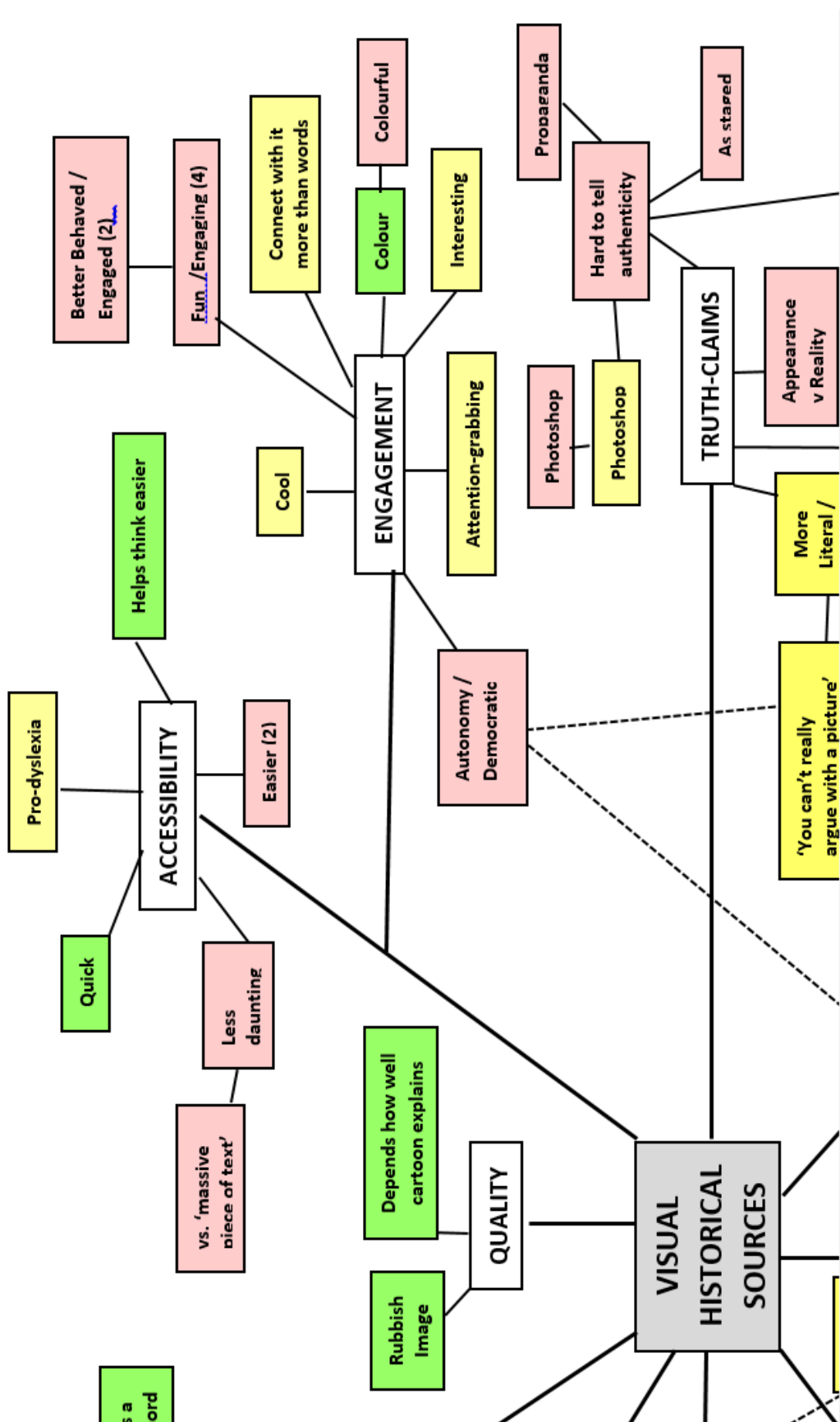
### 8.6.2 Teachers and Education Professionals

Question	Purpose
Why did you become a teacher / professional educator?	The interview starts with a broad question to help set the interviewee at their ease. It also aims to elicit an historical and contextual understanding of their professional development and context/s in which they have practiced. Further, it may help provide referents that can be linked back to at a later date in terms of their value systems and their pedagogical approaches to teaching.
Why did you choose to teach History? What do you see as the value/purpose in teaching History?	As this investigation is specifically focused on VHS in the teaching of History as a discipline, this question is aimed at eliciting both knowledge bases and viewpoints of the purposes/s of History, to help set the theoretical context within which VHS are experienced.
What role do you see visual sources as playing on the teaching of History? What considerations may be needed when using VHS?	This is more specific, and gets to the nub of the overarching research question. The aim now is to gain an understanding of how the role of VHS in educational settings is seen, and why. The subsidiary question about 'considerations' is designed to glean what opportunities VHS are seen to provide in terms of teaching and learning, as well as what issues and problems they may pose.
Tell me about a lesson you are about to teach / have taught using VHS	Part of this question is procedural, intending to understand such things as the age of students taught and the historical topic. It is also designed to establish the source/s used, the rationale for their selection, and to establish the pedagogical approaches adopted, and their rationale.
Is there anything else not covered about use of VHS you want to say?	This is an opportunity for any further thoughts or reflections. The questions is deliberately open-ended to allow space for un-predetermined comments that may clarify previous comments or provide alternative insights.

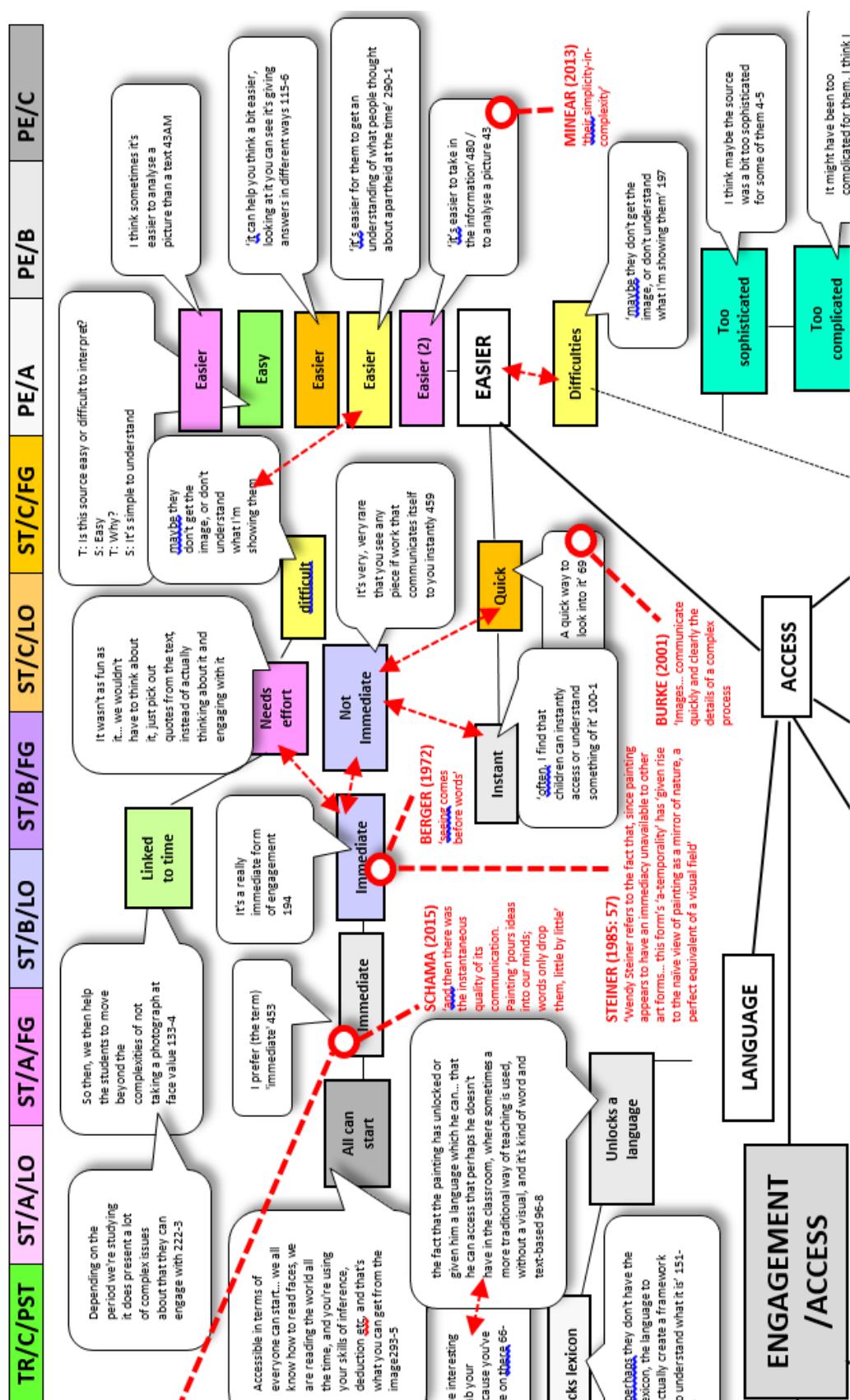
## 8.7 – DETAILS FROM ANALYSIS MATRICES AND THEMATIC GRIDS

### 8.7.1 Detail of example of data analysis coding matrix (for Martha)

E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	
VIEWS ON HISTORY		SUMMARY THEMES											
WHY TEACH HISTORY?	HISTORY: CURRENT RELEVANCE	PROS	CONS	INTERTEXT- TY	OTHER	PEDAGOGY	DESCRIPTION	PROS	CONS	INTERTEXT- TY	OTHER	PEDAGOGY	
we need to learn about who we are, where we came from, how we are now	we need to learn about the past (to understand where we are now)	Art is a sign, it's like a symbol of what's happening. So it's not a by-product of it, it's a product of it.	Like a language as well, language comes out of culture, a setting, a culture. It makes you think the thing that needs to be taught is the history of the world today	young people are working with the portrait, and they're not having a picture of a person and why brother doing it with text? Why not just do it with pictures? with pictures? 243-44	But it's a picture of Queen Elizabeth standing on the world, that that's a pretty much you always see the same picture, referenced in these books, textbooks, when it's a visual stimulus... some kind of facsimile works to a point, but not, another's only a limited amount of wall space ... so there's a constant we're constantly trying to address the diversity of the collection, women's presence in the Suffragettes material... once we get funding and I can produce, you that's quite unusual for the gallery to allow learning to shape what they hang quite so much	the consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who'd make sure you've got that multimodality to touch all people's	A lot of our portraits went to Russia... I had to deliver a workshop to some 7-year old the universality of art spoke to and crossed all language barriers as	COULDN'T ENGAGE WITH TEXT	FACSIMILE VS. 'REAL THING'	PORTRAIT WITHOUT BIO	NO VISUAL IN OWN EDUCATION	WANT TO EMBED VISUALS IN TEACHING	
we need to learn about the history / and heritage and the confusion	I don't see history as a dead subject. You look at heritage and you find relevance	Like a language as well, language comes out of culture, a setting, a culture. It makes you think the thing that needs to be taught is the history of the world today	copyright massively effects us 148	It's a sign, it's like a symbol of what's happening. So it's not a by-product of it, it's a product of it.	But it's a picture of Queen Elizabeth standing on the world, that that's a pretty much you always see the same picture, referenced in these books, textbooks, when it's a visual stimulus... some kind of facsimile works to a point, but not, another's only a limited amount of wall space ... so there's a constant we're constantly trying to address the diversity of the collection, women's presence in the Suffragettes material... once we get funding and I can produce, you that's quite unusual for the gallery to allow learning to shape what they hang quite so much	the consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who'd make sure you've got that multimodality to touch all people's	NEEDED VISUAL STIMULUS	IMAGE CHOICES IN LIMITED SPACE	CRIME IF VISUALS NOT USED	CRIME IF VISUALS NOT USED	CRIME IF VISUALS NOT USED	SUPPORTING QUESTIONING	
think the thing that needs to be taught is the history of the world today	It makes you think the thing that needs to be taught is the history of the world today	Art is a sign, it's like a symbol of what's happening. So it's not a by-product of it, it's a product of it.	copyright massively effects us 148	It's a sign, it's like a symbol of what's happening. So it's not a by-product of it, it's a product of it.	But it's a picture of Queen Elizabeth standing on the world, that that's a pretty much you always see the same picture, referenced in these books, textbooks, when it's a visual stimulus... some kind of facsimile works to a point, but not, another's only a limited amount of wall space ... so there's a constant we're constantly trying to address the diversity of the collection, women's presence in the Suffragettes material... once we get funding and I can produce, you that's quite unusual for the gallery to allow learning to shape what they hang quite so much	the consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who'd make sure you've got that multimodality to touch all people's	TEXT AS BORING (4)	IMAGE CHOICES AS IDEOLOGICAL	UNPICKING VISUAL LANGUAGE	UNPICKING VISUAL LANGUAGE	UNPICKING VISUAL LANGUAGE	NOT 'TELLING THEM'	
and the lens that you're looking at it through, depending on which period	I think that's a really interesting thing for young people to realise, and that's the same for young	Why would you discount a large part of our source material? 244-5	that's a huge challenge for me at the moment, in the Victorian as well, because the NG collects pictures based on the biography of the sitter, not on the other images area? they just happen to be the picture we've got of that	I'd say they (paintings) were equal weight (with text) 270	we're constantly trying to address the diversity of the collection, women's presence in the Suffragettes material... once we get funding and I can produce, you that's quite unusual for the gallery to allow learning to shape what they hang quite so much	the consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who'd make sure you've got that multimodality to touch all people's	COULDN'T BE BOTHERED WITH TEXT	MISMATCH: INTERESTING PEOPLE V. IMAGE NOT READABLE	ANOTHER MAN IN A WIG	HEARING AND SEEING AS QUITE DIFFERENT	ART LIKE A LANGUAGE NEEDS TO BE CONTEXTUALISED	INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH	
think that's a really interesting thing for young people to realise, and that's the same for young	Why would you discount a large part of our source material? 244-5	that's a huge challenge for me at the moment, in the Victorian as well, because the NG collects pictures based on the biography of the sitter, not on the other images area? they just happen to be the picture we've got of that	I'd say they (paintings) were equal weight (with text) 270	we're constantly trying to address the diversity of the collection, women's presence in the Suffragettes material... once we get funding and I can produce, you that's quite unusual for the gallery to allow learning to shape what they hang quite so much	the consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who'd make sure you've got that multimodality to touch all people's	the consideration of the hang... those sort of higher level curatorial decisions on the significance and impact of who you'd put where and why, who'd make sure you've got that multimodality to touch all people's	IT'S A SYMBOL! BAROMETER OF WHAT'S GOING ON	IMAGE CHOICE: SITTER BIO OVER ART QUALITY	ONLY SO MUCH FROM IT WITHOUT CONTEXT	ONLY SO MUCH FROM IT WITHOUT CONTEXT	ONLY SO MUCH FROM IT WITHOUT CONTEXT	ONLY SO MUCH FROM IT WITHOUT CONTEXT	
Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	Also, the sort of construct of the historiograph - who's been chosen, who's not, interesting about the construction of history... everything's	
FG C	13. PE Int A	14. PE Int B	15. PE Int C	16. PE Int D	17. PE Int E	18. PE Int F	19. PE Int G	20. PE Int H	21. PE Int I	22. PE Int J	23. PE Int K	24. PE Int L	



### 8.7.3 Detail from example of Thematic Map: Map 1 (of 7)– Engagement/Access



## 8.8 ETHICAL REVIEW: CONSENT FORM



### CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – STUDENTS

**PROJECT TITLE:** An investigation into; “What knowledge is constructed from visual sources of evidence in a Year 10 History class, and how is it constructed?”

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**Project Approval Reference:** ER/TH273/1

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I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me by my Emily and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher during the course of a History lesson
- Allow my actions and ideas to be recorded in note form during a lesson
- Allow my work from the lesson to be photocopied and be referred to, anonymously, in the write-up of the project.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

As a participant in the project, I understand that in the write-up of the project, my name will be erased and no leading information will be given to prevent my identity from being made public. I also understand that I will be given a copy of data concerning me for my approval before being included in the write up of the research

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. If I wish not to participate for the one lesson, alternative provision will be made so that I may benefit from the lesson elsewhere without being observed or interviewed.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I agree that the information provided can be used in further research projects which have research governance approval, on the understanding that all names and contact information have been removed before it is passed on.

Name:

---

Signature

---

Date:

---

Parental witness to participant's voluntary and informed consent.

I believe that \_\_\_\_\_ (name) understands the above project and gives his/her consent voluntarily.

Name:

---

Signature

---

Address:

---

Date:

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## 8.9 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

#### Study title

“An investigation into the way students understand visual sources of information in History lessons”

#### Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### What is the purpose of the study?

This study is part of a doctoral research program at the University of Sussex which focuses on the ways in which students learn History, specifically in the use of visual sources of information.

#### Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been selected to participate as you are a member of a Year 10 History class at Oriel High School that will be analysing the way visual sources can be interpreted as part of your GCSE History course. You will be observed as part of a whole class, and some students will be randomly selected to be asked a few questions during the lesson about the sources you will be using, and about how you feel the lesson went.

#### Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. It is also stressed that by choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on the marks, assessments or future studies of any student in the class.

#### What will happen to me if I take part?

The study consists on an observation of a single History lesson in the Summer Term that uses visual sources. During the lesson some students will be asked questions about aspects of the learning, the answers to which may be recorded in a notebook. The actions and responses of students to teacher questioning may also be recorded in a notebook. No filming or other forms of media recording will take place. Student work will be photocopied as a record, and may be referred to in the project write-up, but all references to specific students by name will be erased. The class teacher will also be



interviewed after the lesson to elicit their perceptions of how the lesson went. Their responses will similarly be treated anonymously. Their permission will be sought to make an audio recording of the interview.

#### What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Participating in the project will help start to develop an understanding of how you and other students respond to visual sources in History and construct meaning from them.

#### Will my information in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential in terms of ensuring your anonymity. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material by erasing the names of all students and the teacher participating in the write-up of the project.

#### What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to participate, please return the consent form signed by both you and your parent / carer at home to Mr. Haward.

#### What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research project will be written up as part of an assignment for the EdD degree course at the University of Sussex. There are no plans to have the project published, but there is a possibility this may occur in the future, and that it may be referred to in future publications. If this occurs you will, where possible, be informed so you may obtain a copy if you so wish.

#### Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the research as a student or member of staff at University of Sussex in the School of Education and Social Work.

#### Who has approved this study?

The research has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) at the University of Sussex.

#### Contact for Further Information

For further information, please contact Mr. Haward at Oriel High School at [thaward@oriel.w-sussex.sch.uk](mailto:thaward@oriel.w-sussex.sch.uk). If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact Simon Thompson, Director of Initial Teacher Education, University of Sussex.

#### Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

#### Date

10<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

## APPENDIX 8.10 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE

### Transcript: Semi-structured interview with students from Emily's focus group

Interview Details					
<b>Interviewee</b>	<i>See below</i>	<b>Date</b>	<i>22/06/2016</i>	<b>Time start</b>	<i>00:00</i>
<b>Location</b>	<i>x</i>	<b>Rooming</b>	<i>SF6</i>	<b>Time end</b>	<i>15:40</i>
<b>Recording</b>	<i>15:40</i>	<b>Ethics</b>	✓	<b>Other notes</b>	<i>n/a</i>

Students;

1. L
2. R
3. O
4. K
5. AL
6. AM

TH: Um, right, so first of all, this is all about – so I want you to forget any other lessons you've had today. I want you to forget everything else – but you remember having history with Miss. Period 2 – no 3 – the one after break. And, casting your minds – this is just to jog your memory a little bit, because these are some of the things she was doing with you (distribute some of the images used on the table). The first thing I want to visit ... there are 5 things I'm going to ask you. The first one is, what do you think you've learned from the lesson you had period 3?

AM: We learnt to use, like, picture sources ... do you mean like, from the picture, or...

R: Specific...

TH: Good question! I meant, just generally, I'm going to come to the pictures specifically in a minute, but generally, from the whole lessons, the picture – not the picture – what ... w-w-w- what were you learning about?

AM: We were learning about, how Jews were discriminated in Germany

TH: Yeh

R: There were false informations made so that they were prosecuted falsely... well "ish"... (laughter)

TH: No, no, what do you mean by that?

R: The Nazis made up false information, to show that they were inferior.

TH: Ok

O: We learnt how they were depicted to the German public

- 20 TH: Oh, OK. Um, and I guess at this moment it's probably a good time to talk about the things that... because all 3, what you're saying there, refer in some way to some of the visual stuff Miss was doing with you, don't they. So the first bit...now this is how, I don't know if you remember, but this is how the lesson started, wasn't it (shows print of HM's initial slide) with this big picture, with some questions around it. Could you just – could any of you just talk me  
25 through, um, how did you find this activity? Was it engaging? Was it interesting? What was it not... and you can say whatever you think.

L: It helped to get us to use our imagination a bit more, than we probably normally would, because you do have to think about what's going on in the picture. Not just...

TH: Yeh

- 30 R: the text, yeh.

TH: Ok, so if you had a bit of writing about these people, how would that have been different do you think?

R: It wasn't as fun as it... we wouldn't have to think about it, just pick out quotes from the text, instead of actually thinking about it and engaging with it

- 35 AM: Yeh – I don't think it would be as engaging with just the text, because also you wouldn't be able to see their faces, and like...

AL: I think the whole class would mess around more if there was lots of writing or a lot of text to read, because everyone would either be done too quickly, or get bored really easily.

TH: Right, ok.

- 40 AL: I really liked like talking about it, because, like, for example, Luke who sits next to me, I said – oh, I think the ones with the stars on, they're Jews because they're like labelled it – and he said – oh, I didn't know that, so I think you kind of learn things from each other as well.

- TH: Oh, ok – that's really interesting, but - because in some ways you might think, well what – it's just a picture – I'm playing devil's advocate – it's just a picture isn't it. Is there any... how is  
45 it different to text do you think...? In what ways is it... what's it doing?

AM: I think sometimes it's easier to analyse a picture than it is text, and you can kind of learn more from a picture I think, well, not always but... because, you can like find things out by their appearance and stuff

- 50 L: It's so much more interesting when you're looking at a picture, because it's more engaging, and it's more fun, than just a piece of text where you do that pretty much every lesson with English, so it's more fun...

O: and it's easier to take in the information. With text you can, like, read it, but you don't necessarily take in information...

- 55 K: I think with text, it just tells you facts, whilst with pictures you have to really think about it first

TH: Can you tell me a bit more about that? What do you mean by that?

K: It's like, with the one we used today, we had to really think about who they were and what was really going on, whilst with a piece of text it will just tell us everything that's going on

AM: whereas you can decide it just for yourself

60 TH: Oh, ok...

AL: Plus also I think it's a bit less daunting, because like, if you get given a photo it's ok, like, but you can get given like a massive piece of text, sometimes, I don't know – you might find it switches some people off because they know it's going to take a while...

65 TH: Ok, that's really interesting. I'm interested that you're using the phrase "you have to kind of think about..." So if you're looking at a picture, what are you thinking about? What is it that's kind of... Can any of you...? Go on...

O: You kind of ... empathise, I guess. So you kind of put yourself in their shoes and imagine what it would be like if you were there... so it kind of makes you think about, er, more than just the facts, but how you'd be feeling.

70 K: Because you want to think about the person behind the picture, like who they are, how old they are, what the time was the photo was taken, how they felt, and it's so much easier to get that from a picture than a piece of text where it will just tell you.

75 TH: Oh, ok. So, what you're saying, it's kind of like, I know you used the word empathy, it's kind of like a feeling, you can of... do you feel like you can identify with people in the photograph?

AM: I think it's easier to identify with someone from a photograph than it is a piece of text.

R: Yeh..

TH: Yeh, ok.

80 O: Plus, in a text you don't know if like it's going to over-exaggerate it a bit, compared to, like, a photo, where you can just see their faces and their emotions. Like, it could be staged or something..

TH: Ok. So, tell me that, because there's a cliché, isn't there, that, that the camera never lies. It always tells the truth. What do you think about that, is that true? Tell me, tell me...

Laughter.

85 R: Nowadays, it's more...you can photo-shop anything really

General: Yeh

K: And like, a lot of photos would be used for prop, propagan ... I can't speak...

R: Yeh – propaganda...

L: ... propaganda as well, so you wouldn't know if it's been fully staged or whether it's all real...

90 R: because it's always got to, er... help... well...like... I can't even think of the word...

TH: No, no, no – you're alright. Go on...

R: ...benefit someone – that's it.

AM: A while ago we were looking at a picture of... probably the Nazi youth?... the Hitler Youth, and it was a picture of a classroom, but you could just...I personally thought it was staged,  
95 because they all look so informal...

K: Their faces and their expressions...

L: You never know, you never know who's behind the camera, and who's telling them what to do, and that's kind of always, um, more, it was...I don't know, I think it kind of makes it more interesting as well, because you've got to really think about that.

100 AM: Yeh...

O: Like even at school they'll say "smile" like when you get in a school photo, like you're not always happy, but you've got to...

TH: Yeh. That's really interesting. Now, Miss didn't just give you a picture, she gave you some questions around it, didn't she. In fact, you were generating questions, she was giving some  
105 prompts. Is this helpful? I don't mind if you think it's rubbish, or...

O: I found it a bit confusing, because I wasn't completely sure how to put it into, like... a question.

R: I found it quite ... I found it easier, because it's different questions, so, um, you have to think about it... so, you think of different aspects

110 K: I think it's quite helpful as well because you've got to look at each one and think... ok, I've asked a "what" question now, I'll go onto a "where" question.

AM: Yeh – I did that

TH: Ok – yeh

L: But we have learnt how to use the how, what, why, and when quite a lot, because they're  
115 more of the kind of simple ones, but I don't think we've ever used the did, the can, the could... sort of one

A: Yeh

O: It's like developing other questions that we are doing

K: Yeh

120 TH: Mm ok. Any other thoughts about the starter activity? Anything we haven't said? (pause)... I think they're all really interesting ideas anyway, that you say. So there's some other... whoops... there's some other things... now this is a little selection ... some of you may have seen some of these bits. Er, from your group ... I don't know which side, apologies, I don't know which group you were in, but I've just got a little selection of the bits that Miss had. I  
125 don't know if these bits look kind of familiar. Um... any kind of thoughts about... so thinking about some specific examples of kind of visual sources, any...

R: This picture... I thought that, it's about... this alien is sort of... a Jew, and it's showing that, they're just taking up the money, the houses, and kind of like... dicrimini... discrimises...

A: discrimination...

130 R: Dehumanises them, because it's comparing them to an alien, and I find that kind quite, like, I don't know what it is... (laughter) like Hitler, how he just blames... Jews... justbecause ... he can.

L: I didn't realise it has a big nose.

R: It's like, dehumanises them.

135 O: It also shows the octopus, or whatever it is, um, controlling everything. That kind of, if I was a Na... a German, back then... I'd kind of think, well if that's k... the octopus, or the Jews that's controlling everything then, what's going to happen when they got.. when they've won?

R: Yeh

A: It kind of contradicts everything as well, because the Jews weren't ruling everything.

140 L: Hitler and the Nazis were...

A: Yeh

K: If anything the Jews were at the lowest of the scale...

L: Yeh

145 K: And the picture really actually stereotypes, um, with like the idea of the big nose, and the big burly person.

General: Umm. Yeh...

R: This picture shows that, it's taken all the money, the land and... yeh... like controlling, cos they have the whip.

150 TH: Mm ... So does this, do you think this... in what way does this picture help you understand that, that moment in time, that moment in history?

R: It's... you think about it, like ... with a text, it's like it tells you. You don't actually have to think about it, whereas with this image, if you think about it, it doesn't tell you anything ... so you have to...

L: Interpret it

155 R: interpret it *your way*.

K: You want to think about how other people would have reacted when they saw it, whilst, and like how people in Britain would have reacted when they would have seen something like that, whilst if it was a piece of text, there wouldn't have been any more of a need to react to it, but...

160 TH: Now, you haven't done, that's really interesting, you haven't done...is this your first lesson on the Holocaust that you've just done?

General: Yes

TH: So some of you might know a little bit, or would you have heard of the word and maybe have some ideas...?

165 R: Yup

AM: I'm sure we... I think we learned about it in Year 6, when we did World War 2

AL: Yeh – World War 2. In Year 6 we learned quite a lot about it...

L: We didn't... do much of it at our school, so the Holocaust...

AM: Yeh – we did quite a bit...

170 TH: Ok, so maybe some slightly mixed experiences. Some have done more, which is fine, and  
some have less. What I'm wondering as well, I'd be interested to hear your thoughts, if you  
didn't know much about it ... I've got a small copy here ... and you're teacher was starting off  
showing you this, but you didn't have any other information about it, in what way... or, what  
175 do you think you might be able to get from this, and what are the kind of limits of how much  
you might be able to kind of get from it?

AL: I think at first you might be quite confused as to what was going on, and you wouldn't  
really know the stereotypes of the Jews at that time, so you might just think, oh, there's this  
giant octopus alien thing, taking over everything. Whilst, when you've got more  
understanding, you can see it is a stereotypical idea of a Jew trying to control Germany.

180 TH: Yeh – so, one of the things I'm interested in as well – thank you for that – is... so if a  
teacher's using this, what could teachers do to help you kind of understand what this is all  
about? You're fairly savvy and you obviously know some stuff, and you've just had a lesson on  
it, but if you knew nothing about this, what kind of things do you think... what advice might  
you give to a Emilybout...

185 O: Well, personally, if I knew absolutely nothing about it, it kind of looks like a cartoon strip ...  
like, it looks like a comic strip, so I think they should probably give some background  
information about, like... why it is...

AL: But like not *too* much, so you can still look into the photo

K: Yeh, cos if they give you too much information, then there's nothing really to...

190 AM: It changes your opinion as well

AL: I think they should just say whose perspective it's coming from, so – it came from the  
Nazi's perspective. Because, they could think...

AM: They could say who it is, and who the octopus-alien is meant to be

L: Yeh, and leave it... (indistinct)

195 TH: So what stage do you think they should give you some more information about that ...  
should that be at the beginning, or ... you kind of...

AM: I think they should let us analyse it first, then ask us what we've thought about it, and  
*then* give us a bit of information...

L:... and look at how that changes our interpretation of it

200 K: I think it would be quite interesting if they said that, erm...there's like certain characters,  
there's like the Germans, Nazis, and like Jews ... and you have to like guess for yourself who  
would be who ... and then ask and they'll tell you.

TH: Ok, ok – so maybe kind of some structure ...a bit of structure, so not telling you, but maybe getting you thinking a bit, and , um, maybe using questioning around that. Um, the last thing I  
 205 just want to ask you is about...History lessons in general, because I've just come into one lesson, and I know you... and it could be this year, or it could be like in Year 7 or 8... are there any times that kind of stick in your mind where you've where you've kind of experienced using visual ... could be kind of paintings, pictures, or photographs or anything where it's kind of helped or not helped... anything that sticks...

210 L: I think the lesson when we were studying World War One, and we had to do... one person was describing the picture of propaganda, and the other person had their back...and they had to draw it

AM: Yeh... they had to draw it...

215 L: I think that helped a lot because you had to think about how different people would interpret that as well

R: As well as colours, because that lesson, it was quite a colourful lesson, whereas text is just black, white, dull, whereas when we're using images is mostly vibrant colours, so that you can actually remember it

220 AL: That's like I remember doing Jack the Ripper, and they showed like images of like, the women... and it was like, I don't know, it always sticks in my head, because it's like shocking...

TH: Yeh, yeh

AM: Oh, yeh, that was it...

TH: What... that back to back thing, would you mind...

225 AL: Well, you had one person with a picture of propaganda, then the other person would be like back to back with them, with a piece of paper, and the person with the picture would then describe what it was, and the other person would have to draw it out

TH: Ok. Lovely, thank you.

L: We had to analyse that as well.

230 TH: Right, I know the bell's gone ... just before we go, anything else that ... go on (to Olivia), I know you were half starting to say something...

O: Um, I was going to say, when we were in Year 7, we had to sort, we had to work out which, um, which sources were primary and secondary, from the pictures...

R: We done that...

O: And stuff like that

235 TH: Yeh, just something that sticks in your mind. Lovely, thank you very much, I really appreciate your time everyone.

Proof read first: 24/06/2016



## 8.11: EXAMPLE OF LESSON OBSERVATION NOTES

**Year 10 – period 2 9.30-10.30 - 18.07.2016 - 20 in class – 16 boys, 4 girls**

*Context - “called into” lesson from staffroom by student about 5 mins. in.*

*First 10 mins of lesson is debrief from GCSE History mock exam.*

*Meanwhile...*

*On screen – “freeze”*

*“In the present day... Look at the following visual image in front of you...”*

*Project fantasy: Brexit flying saucer with union jack and man singing*

*The Realities... trade issues, economic uncertainty, job confusion, chaos written on shark fins around island with same man, union jack and Brexit sign next to it.*

*“Connect” on screen*

### **Slide / Image 1**

*“Back to lesson...”*

*How many of you got a chance to see that as you came in?*

*I’ve got some questions..*

1. What type of source is this?

S: Visual

TR: Let’s go a bit further?

S: It’s playing with satire.

TR: What other term **might we use to describe this?**

S: A satirical cartoon?

TR: That might be one – or political cartoon.

2. What type of source is this?

3. What historical enquiry might that sourced be used for? (if there was a History lesson about this in 30 years’ time?)

S: Brexit

TR: Or, “*Britain leaving the European Union*” (in exaggerated voice)

TR: What can you tell me about this type of source?

S: they’d normally be biased.

TR: Why?

S: Certain newspapers are linked to political parties.

TR: **Can you give any** examples?

S: **They might be** right-wing

S: people who write them are satirical experts

4. Is this source easy or difficult to interpret?

S: Easy

TR: Why?

S: It’s very simple to understand

TR: How many feel **it's** easy to interpret? (about ½ hands put hands up – not sure if other half agree or disagree / are just being quiet)

S: The one on the right, people knows sharks and stuff are associated with danger... it's quite easy to know it's a negative image

S: It can be seen in different ways

TR: what is your interpretation?

S: Leaving EU's quite negative

TH: What's going on in the left-**hand cartoon**?

S: **He's** left it, quite happy, doesn't really know what's going on about

S: On **the** right – problems "all associated with the citizens of Britain"

TR: **Could you** expand further?

S: it's a sort of expectations versus reality thing.

TR: Why did this person use sharks?

S: There's no escape

S2: When you're isolated like that and you're surrounded, there's no escape

S3: The island represents Britian

TR: How many of you have that version of an answer? (no hands up)

TR: Why **haven't any** others **others of you** said that? What could you do?

S: Read books

S2: Anaylse the question

S3: You need to know much about Brexit

TR: Who understands this?

S: People who watch the news?

TR: How many of you watch the news? (about ½ put their hands up)

Q: What is easy/difficult about this type of source to interpret?

Q Where would you usually find this type of source?

S: On-line.

TR: You've got to know the context

Image 2 (Cartoon of the *Night of Long Knives*)

TR: S... was ist das? (TR uses a Germanic accent)

S: A satirical cartoon poking fun at the Nazis

TR: What event **is it showing**?

S: The Night of Long Knives

TR: This is very good because it **fits the** functions **of** all the things **needed** to analyse satirical cartoons properly.

TR: This will be very useful when you come to do South Africa next year for the exam. The ability to decode and analyse them is essential for the exam.... I'm also plugging Government and Politics.

## Slide / Image 2

*Here are some key questions that should be asked by you (or me!) when analysing a political cartoon:* (text on new ppt. screen)

TR: **It's a** condom

TR: **It's** David Cameron – because it looks like him?

TR: Who wants to know why he's got a condom head

TR: Why does he have a condom for a head?

TR: (**mentions**) Steve Bell

S: Because he's a dick  
 TR: Ok, that might be one **reason**  
 TR: What does it do?  
 S: Protects – from having children  
 S2: ... **and** from getting diseases  
 S: Is that saying he's a mistake? Because if you have a condom and it splits...  
 TR: This is one of my favourite cartoonists – Steve Bell, of The Guardian  
 TR: What **is the** aim of **a** satirical cartoon?  
 S: Make people laugh, but also have social commentary  
 TR: Why **are** politicians **the** first ones to be mocked?  
 S: They're the people in charge of our country and making decisions  
 TR: Absolutely

*Teacher now goes through questions that appear on the screen next to the cartoon, in order;*

### **1. What is the topic of the cartoon?**

S: Politics.  
 TR: politics? Ok, dig a little deeper.  
 S2: **It's** **a** about the NHS, how he's trashed it.  
 TR: Why **is** Cameron blamed?  
 S: because he's in charge  
 S2 because he's increased debt  
 TR: Fantastic.  
 TR: How does he look?  
 S: Embarrassed, awkward.  
 S2: He's got red cheeks  
 TR: **The** cartoonist – **Steve** Bell said you see the cheeks, the red face...

### **2. Which stylistic devices does the cartoon employ to drive home **its** point?**

TR: What phrase you pick up on, that I'm hoping you're familiar with? Nile – wakey, wakey – I picked on you **because** your eyes were closing.  
 S: I don't understand what you mean?  
 TR "stylistic devices" what **does** this mean? Oh – one person?! Who's your English teachers? I bet you just haven't been listening.  
 TR: Laura's answer's spot on – words and phrases  
 TR: What devices are being used in a cartoon?  
 S: Humour  
 S2: short phrases  
 S3: Visual elements like the picture  
 S4: political references

### **3. What's the message of the cartoon?**

TR: What does the cartoon tell us about the cartoonists' political views? How many of you read The Guardian? (None put their hands up).  
 TR: LA?  
 LA: Um, I think it's one of the more respected newspapers – **its** reporting **is** more truthful in what it says.  
 TR: **Where on the** political spectrum **is it**?  
 LS: Don't know...  
 TR: The Guardian **is** traditionally left-wing, supporting Labour. Certainly not Conservative.  
 S: If the Labour party **was** in power, would **Steve Bell** mock them too?

TR: **He would do** regardless of whoever's in power, it's the cartoonists job. He'd maybe be a little bit more in power?

**4. To what extent does the cartoon correspond to historical reality?**

TR: Historical reality? What do you mean by that? Historical reality? They're exaggerated truths.

TR: Which parties are based on realism, and which not?

S: **David Cameron** does not wear a condom on his head.

TR: If someone's saying you've trashed the NHS, it's quite emotive language, **isn't it**?

TR: What's a problem with analysing **it**? You'd have to be aware of the politics.

**5. What additional information do we need to evaluate the cartoon that we don't have there?**

S: You might not know who it was (some hands up **to show they** wouldn't know)

S2: It just looks a bit like him...

TR: That's not the best one, but it's the only more tamer one that was not an 18.

S: But **The Guardian's** not **an** under 18 **newspaper**?

TR: That's the one I could put up

**6. What questions remain open (about this cartoon)?**

S: If it's true.

TR: You would maybe have to know about the political party this man a leader of?

S: Conservatives.

TR: I find that cartoon absolutely hilarious.

TR: **The Conservatives** have **a** history about decreasing money spent on society, empowering people to make their own money.

S: (to teacher) What would you say were like the main differences between Labour and **the Conservatives**. **What's the** first thing **that comes** into your head?

TR: **Conservatives are** working for bigger **corporate** businesses, supporting **the** rich not poor – **Labour is** working class – social justice and equality. **Corbynites are** more traditional – those voting against him are Blairites

**Slide / Image 3**

TR: Who is **the** centrepiece?

S: Trump

TR: **Can you** talk to me about this cartoon.

S: Comparing **him** to a Nazi

TR: What sort of stylistic devices **are being used**?

(students mention armbands that look similar to ones used by Nazis)

TR: **Good, they're not** quite used the same... they've mimicked it

S: And how they're like **how** Jewish people had to wear stars

TR: Who are they?

S: Muslims

TR: I don't know this flag – they all belong to Muslim countries

LA: **It's** not a flag – it **stands for** Muslims

S: People with armbands sort of dominate – Muslims are depressed... they don't look happy, like they don't have power.

TR: **You've** got to know what **the** Nazis did, who Trump is, what Trump **stands** for?

TR: So, there are a lot of things playing here

S: Sir, who are those on the far right?

TR: What do you think?

S: Americans?

TR: Correct – why?

S: **The** one on **the** right's a bit fat, **they're** known to eat fast food and stuff

TR: And we call that **a**...?

S: A stereotype

TR: **The** first one's **an** exaggeration. Am I pointing to face, or to **the** general area?

TR: Lovely answer – he's the centre of attention

TR: If Trump became president, is it very likely his face appears like this?

TR: With Trump, **we** don't know how much **is** funny or **to take** seriously – he's a complete psychopath

S: Mount Rushmore?

TR: That's different – **not** satirical

TR: Symbols – helps us to decode things further – there's a lot of heavy symbology here.

TR: National characters - what do we mean by this?

S: Someone like Obama.

TR: Good answer – **but it's** not the one I'm looking for.

TR: What British characters **are there**?

S: Like **a** posh man with a top hat, the Queen...

*Bell sounds for end of lesson.*

TR: Very good work – we'll carry on with this next lesson.

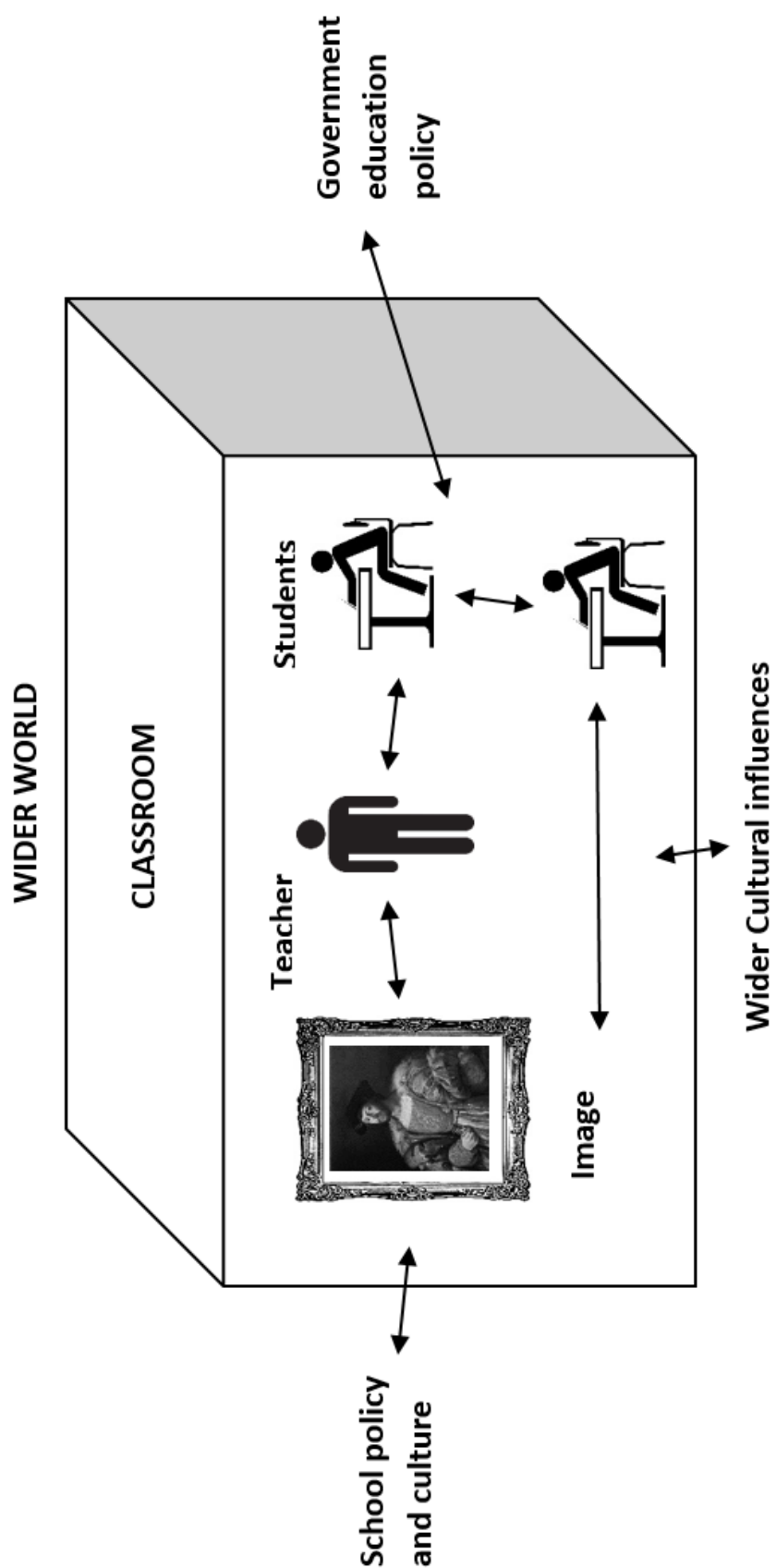
N.B. text in red added to notes retrospectively

## 8.12 MY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

- 09/2013 EdD Program start
- 09/2013 Appointed 'Director of Learning' in West Sussex state secondary school
- 09/2015 Appointed 'Lecturer in History and Holocaust Education' at UCL, Centre for Holocaust Education
- 07/2016 Paper presented at International Sociology Association (ISA) 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum, Vienna '*State of the Art: An investigation into how students, teachers and professional educators understand and use sources in the teaching and learning of History in England*'
- 06/2017 Paper presented at the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE), London "*Ah – I get it! The Sense and Non-Sense of Data: Knitting and Knotting in Thematic Analysis*"
- 06/2017 Paper presented at TEHO 2017 Conference, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, 7-8 June 2017 '*How do students, teachers and professional educators understand and use sources in the teaching and learning of History in England?*'
- 09/2017 Paper presented at BERA, University of Sussex, 5-7 Sept. '*State of the Art: An investigation into how students, teachers and professional educators understand and use sources in the teaching and learning of History in England*'

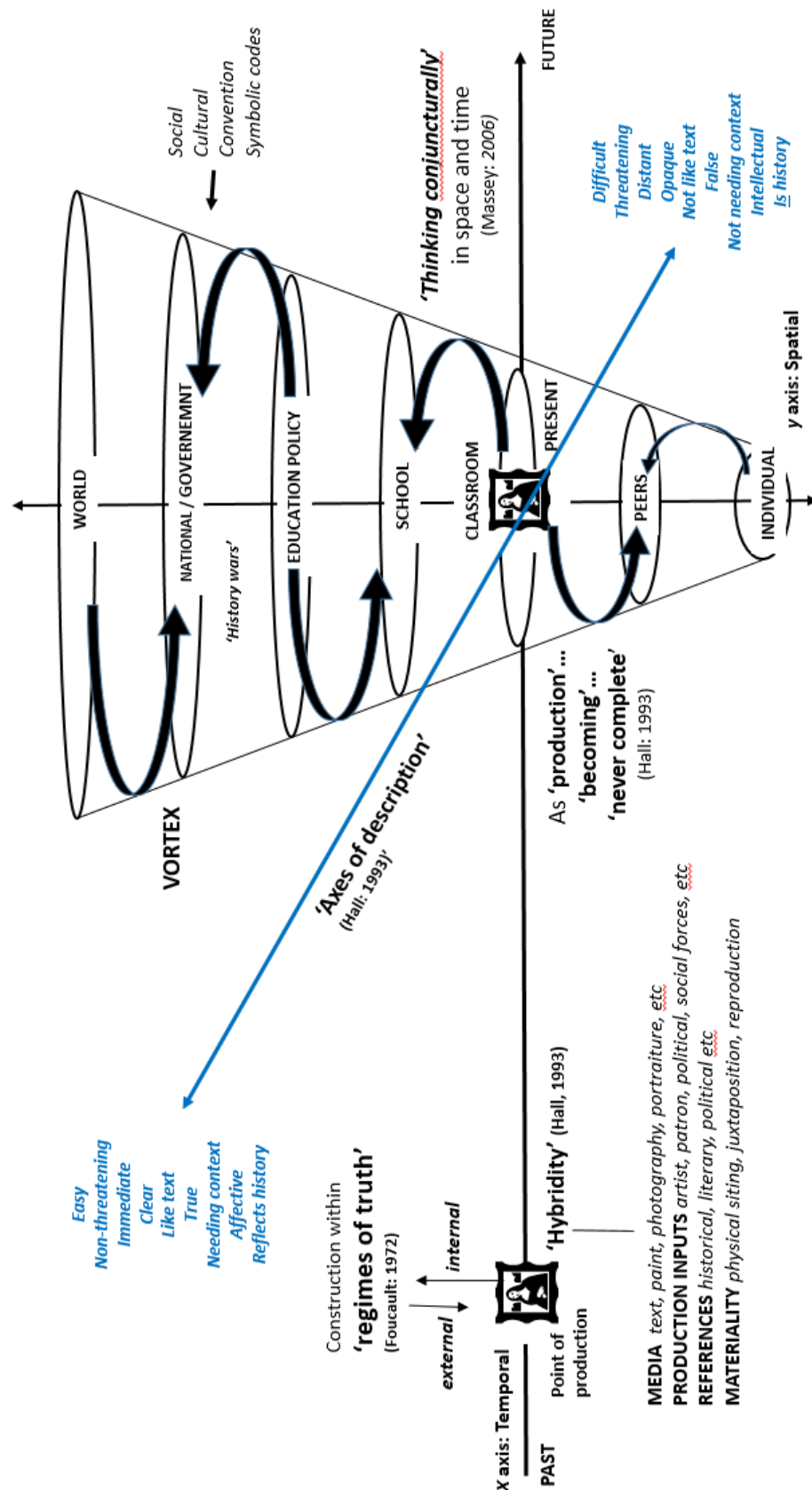
## APPENDIX 8.13.1

DIAGRAM SUMMARISING AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW VHS WORK,  
COMPLETED in 2015

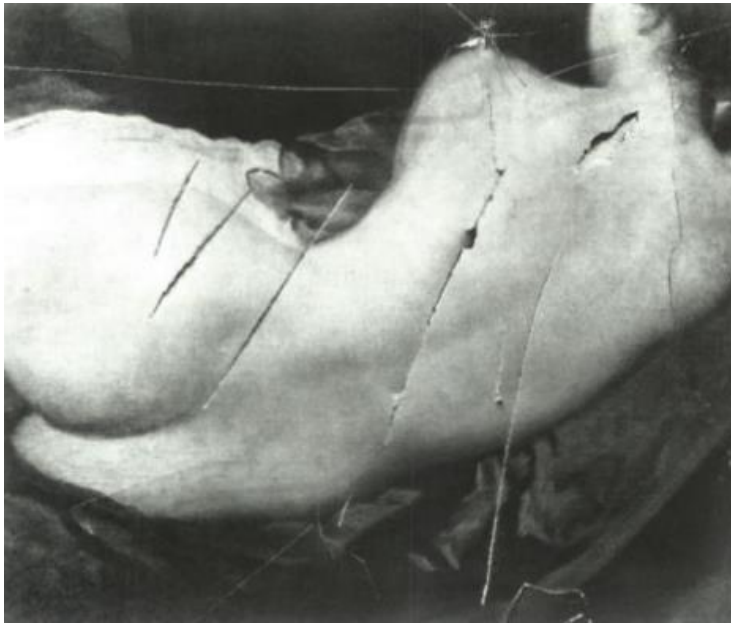


## APPENDIX 8.13.2

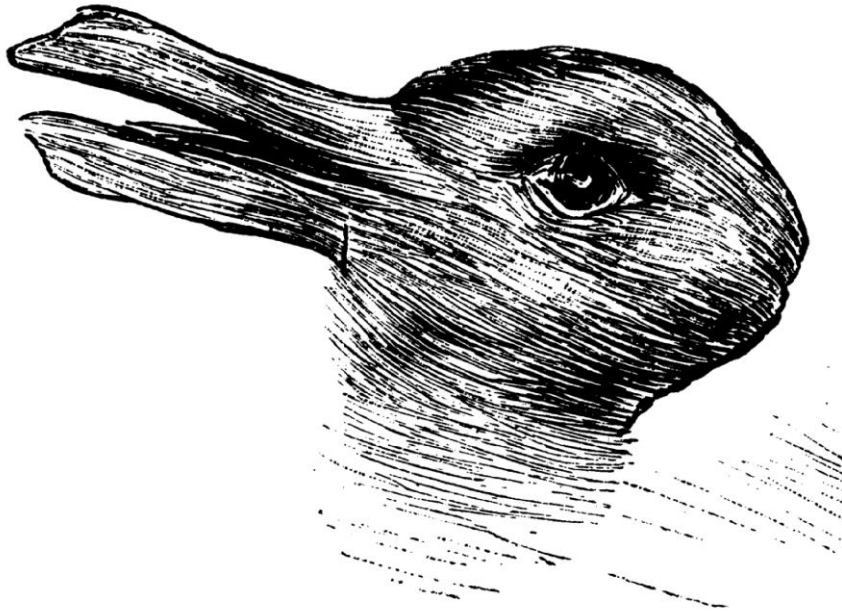
DIAGRAM SUMMARISING AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW VHS WORK,  
COMPLETED in 2017





**APPENDIX 8.14 THE 'ROKEBY VENUS'**

Damage sustained in the 1914  
after an attack on the painting by  
Mary Richardson, The National  
Gallery, London.

**APPENDIX 8.15 DUCK/RABBIT**

Duck/Rabbit from <https://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/thumbnails/image/2016/02/14/12/duck-rabbit.png>