A case study exploring the types of knowledge year nine students need to work effectively with similarity and difference as a concept when learning about the Holocaust

William Mason

(PGCE Secondary History, 2019-2020)

email: masonwill1996@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper documents an explorative case study aimed at investigating the knowledge and ideas held by myself, as a teacher, and those of students when working with the complicated and often confused historical second order concept codified as 'similarity and difference' in the latest History National Curriculum. This case study centres around a seven-lesson enquiry exploring the variation in lived experiences of several different persecuted groups of people during the Holocaust. This paper argues that whilst the ideas and application of similarity and difference as a concept from myself and students were widely divergent, students chose to argue conceptually in several different ways. In observing and defining the different forms of conceptual argument students engaged in, I am able to draw tentative ideas about progression when arguing conceptually with similarity and difference.

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Introduction

I was nervous about the 'interview lesson' even before I had started applying for first-post jobs. New school, new class, new peering eyes observing at the back of the room. It had not occurred to me for a second that the biggest challenge that I would face on the day would be the particular conceptual focus of the lesson that I would be required to teach. Nevertheless, the email came through, at shockingly short notice before the interview day itself. I opened it apprehensively as I suspected my lesson brief would be inside: I needed to prepare a lesson within the backdrop of an enquiry titled "How different was Medieval London to the Islamic Empires?". I had become used to enquiry questions, that guide students' work over the medium and long term, to be focused on a specific 'second order concept' that would frame students' knowledge and organise how histories 'substantive' knowledge is generated and understood. I racked my brains, searching for the conceptual focus sitting behind this question; significance - no, change and continuity - no, evidence - definitely not. A fellow trainee pointed it out, "that's surely similarity and difference". The fact that the focus was not immediately clear was indicative of a pervasive, fuzzy *vagueness* surrounding my understanding of the concept. Despite an excellent and engaging university seminar on the issue, and an accompanying amount of reading of critical literature, I was unclear when it came to planning for my interview. I need not have worried about the practical aspects of my lesson, I had what can only be described as a 'dream class', a group of engaged, attentive, and exceptionally hard-working Year 7 students. Yet, when it came to their work, both written and oral, the fuzzy vagueness that characterised my thinking on the concept was present again. I was not even sure about what they were seemingly unable to do, I just knew that it was unclear, un-analytical, and failed to replicate the kind of conceptual clarity and rigour within students' work that I had become so used to seeing when teaching concepts such as causation or evidence. I went into

the post-interview lesson reflection fully critical of my planning yet was reassured by the observing teacher; as far as she was concerned the lesson was one of quality, and that she was impressed by the extent of my reflective criticism. I got the job. I was also able to take from the day the realisation of a glaring gap in my conceptual understanding. I knew I needed to explore further, and to a greater extent, the concept of similarity and difference. I wanted to attack head-on this fuzzy vagueness that seemed to exist in my mind and the work of the students that I taught.

Solidifying Similarity and Difference

For members of the history teaching community, the concept of similarity and difference has been appropriately described as a "fluid notion" (Black, 2012, p.30). Indeed, settling on a single, solid definition for the concept is remarkably difficult. The concept's realisation as a distinct focus is inconsistent within numerous fields of critical literature, and especially within an international context. Interestingly, for example, Sexias and Morton (2012) writing in a Canadian and US context does not include the concept as one of their "big six" historical thinking concepts; and Lévesque, (2008) writing again in a Canadian context, includes no mention of similarity and difference in his exploration of history's 'procedural concepts'. Perhaps the omission of any mention of the concept in a recent international context is indicative of the concept's inconsistent realisation in a English history teaching context.

Indeed, from its initial inclusion in the 1991 National Curriculum (DfE, 1991) the concept has been interpreted and reinterpreted through an array of statutory guidance and a multifaceted body of critical literature, and consequently, through time the concept has appropriated several different meanings.

If I were to go any further in my exploration, I would first need to trace and describe the concept's realisation through critical literature for myself. I needed to solidify similarity and difference.

The first obstacle I faced was tracing the original manifestation of similarity and difference as a conceptual goal for the teaching of history. Key pieces of literature (Counsell, 2011; McCrory, 2013) cite the concept's initial realisation somewhere within the early literature of the Schools History Project in the 1980s. Yet, on surveying an extensive amount of this available literature, uncovering detail, a reference, or even a brief, passing allusion to the concept is puzzlingly difficult (Shemilt & McDougal, 1980; Flew, 1986; Dawson, 1989). I would need to settle then on the

concept's initial codification within the 1991 National Curriculum where students were required to understand and describe how features of different historical situations and experiences related to one another (DfE, 1991; Woolley 2017). Apparent in this formulation is a seemingly solid analytical focus, that students were required to do something with similarity and difference as a conceptual tool for framing knowledge. This focus however did not persist – in the revised 1995 National Curriculum, it had lost its conceptual force, appearing as purely a substantive demand to study the "characteristic features of society" (DfE, 1994; Counsell, 2011). This substantive demand appears more akin to history teaching's sister "fluid notion", sense of period; students had lost the obligation to do anything analytical with the concept, and it now appeared as a priority of content selection for teachers. Similarity and difference was sliding away.

As Bracey, Jackson, and Allison (2011) note from 2007, key political developments drove a curricular priority for more representation within history teaching of diverse, under-represented groups in the past (Ajegbo, Kuwan, & Sharma, S.*,* 2007; Wrenn et al.; OFSTED, 2007). Consequently, within the 2008 History NC, the concept of similarity and difference had again appropriated a different meaning. Under its new manifestation, 'diversity', students were required to "describe and analyse …The social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the societies studied" (DfE, 2008). The conceptual aspect of the concept had almost entirely been relegated in favour of a substantive focus on content selection; its analytical past alluded to only briefly within an attainment target, stating that students "begin to recognise and describe the nature and extent of diversity" (DfE, 2008). As Bracey et al. (2011) note, the vague ambiguity behind the language of this target ensured confusion and misinterpretation from history teachers. From here, the divergence of interpretation among curriculum theorists and history teachers was at its most stark.

For some teachers, this was interpreted as purely a substantive demand, a priority of selecting content to teach that represented the experiences of under-represented groups in the past. Richardson's advice for history teachers on exploring diversity advocates that they work to "build the concept into" their curriculums by identifying space for the inclusion of the experiences of diverse groups of people (Richardson, 2008, p.1). Directly influenced by the NC's focus on diversity, Sheldrake and Banham reworked their modern world study away from "war and more war" to a scheme of work focusing on the school's diverse local context and its links to the contribution of Empire nations in both wars, the impact of post-war migration (Sheldrake & Banham, 2007, p.39). In her argument that the NC be truly diverse, Traille (2007) advocated for a

broader and more accurate representation of different ethnicities through her work examining the effect of the teaching of traditional narratives on the perception from African-Caribbean students of their past, and of history as a discipline. For these teachers, and many others (Byrom & Riley, 2007; Gove-Humphries, 2008; Jarman, 2009), explicitly motivated by the 2008 NC, students that are engaged in successful and meaningful teaching about diversity are exposed to the experiences and characteristics of under-represented, marginal groups in the past. For them, diversity is done.

However, other history teachers and curricular theorists have argued that despite the undeniable merit of selecting content to represent marginal and underrepresented experience, there must be more to teaching about a diverse past. Counsell (2011) warns against the dangerous theoretical inconsistency of assuming that simply knowing about a diverse past is enough. She states that "Reasons why it is a good thing for pupils to understand cultural, ethnic and religious diversities are many", but that these must "remain in the content section where they belong" (Counsell, 2011, p.219). Bradshaw illustrates the damaging consequences of diversity considered simply as a "box to be ticked" issue of content selection: "Yes, we did our diversity when we did the slavery unit, or, We do migrant workers in Scotland for our 'diversity unit'" (Bradshaw, 2009, p.5). Bradshaw criticises the 2008 NC's focus on diversity as a "slippery fish" for its mere requirement that teachers only include certain diverse types of historical content (ibid.). McCrory argues that simply knowing about the experiences of people in the past is not enough for students to access its conceptual rigour, that thinking analytically "does not happen automatically through the amassing of detail" (McCrory, 2013, p.10). For Bradshaw, for students to think meaningfully about diversity and the complexity of the past, it must regain its second order, analytical properties; teachers must plan for them to "do" something with diversity, to think analytically about the extent and nature of similarity and difference between the lived experiences of people in the past (Bradshaw, 2009, p.5). The divergence of interpretation of this concept has been narrowed greatly by writers arguing that students must be equipped with the tools to think conceptually about the similarity and differences between the experiences of diverse people in the past.

Curriculum theorisers and history teachers develop this point further, asking pertinent questions about what it means for students to get better at reasoning with similarity and difference, producing several important pedagogical principles (Anthony, 2009; Bradshaw, 2009; Byrom, 2009; Counsell, 2009a; White, 2011; Worth, 2011; Black, 2012; Carr, 2012; McCrory, 2013; Olivey, 2019).

Utilising principles from Riley's seminal work (2008), a substantial number of teachers frame the analytical nature of the concept neatly through a sequence of lessons guided by an overarching and carefully formulated enquiry question, presenting to students immediately a complicated historical puzzle to be solved. McCrory challenged her students to think deeply into the complexity of historical difference, asking them "How many people did it take to make an Essex man?", questioning the historical accuracy of a single description (McCrory, 2013, p.13).

Similarly, several teachers present generalisation as an engaging vehicle for students to think conceptually about similarity and difference by considering the hidden complexity lying behind generalised terms, at both lesson and enquiry wide levels. Byrom highlights the interesting puzzle of generalisation perfectly, by calling for teachers to challenge students' assumptions directly; "to they or not to they" (Byrom, 2009, p.2). By enabling her students to challenge generalisations as 'too simple', Counsell (2009a) was at once both showing students the immense complexity within the diversity of the past and equipping them to use oral argument and specific knowledge to tighten their descriptions of the past. Similarly, Black (2012, p.34) used several generalised "provocative statements" to entice her students to think analytically with similarity and difference about the complexity of past situations. White (2011) argues for equipping students with a comparative understanding of similar, but different events in time to draw out and describe common themes, elucidating for his students certain tricky, and often over-generalised first order concepts, such as 'revolution'.

In order for students to effectively analyse the nature and extent of similarity and differences within the experiences of different people in the past, a number of teachers use categories as sorting tools to enable analysis and argument. Carr (2012) uses substantive categories such as rich/poor/middle class, male/female, town/country, yet interestingly to allow students to argue about the rich diversity of experience within these categorical generalisations. McCrory uses thematic categorisation to explicitly guide her students' analysis of the nature and extent of similarity and difference. At multiple points during her enquiry she stopped her students and asked them to judge the experiences of different people along themed continuums such as "Reason to migrate: forced or chosen" or "Experiences: positive to negative" (McCrory, 2013, p.16). Black (2012) and McCrory (2013) take this further however, by utilising the work of Burbules (1997) who further problematises the concept of a difference', providing several further categories or types of internal difference such as variety, degree, variation, version, analogy, difference beyond, difference within

and difference against. Olivey (2019, p.63) presented to his students the complicated yet enticing problem of the complexity lying beneath both subjective identity and first-order conceptual labels by asking them "What did *class* mean in industrial Britain?".

Utilising the work of history teachers such as Woodcock (2005), teachers argue that scaffolding judgement with precise and analytical comparative language can help students access complex conceptual reasoning about similarity and difference. Bradshaw (2009, p.10) used phrases such as "...appears to contrast to" or language such as "exceptional/unusual/uncommon" to enable his students to make precise analytical arguments.

Others discuss the resolution of reference to specific evidence when students make judgements about similarity and differences (Bradshaw, 2009; Black, 2012; Carr, 2012; McCrory, 2013) McCory (2013) challenged her students to consider the different 'vantage points' of historical enquiry when making judgements. She hoped to enable them to appreciate that generalisations or arguments made at one vantage point or resolution, could fall at another. Similarly, to test the arguments of her students, Carr (2012) asked her students to consider the specific case studies of individuals within those groups, testing the accuracy of generalised statements applied to individual experience. Black (2012, p.36) highlighted in her students' written work a certain "general fuzziness" in their arguments and diagnosed a reluctance to refer to specific evidence to substantiate their claims.

A persistent theme running throughout this literature is the general difficulty students, and teachers, face when working with similarity and difference as a concept. McCrory diagnosed the danger of "conceptual stillness" in students' thinking and consequently their writing (McCory, 2013, p.12). In addition, she discusses the "mind maze" she encountered once she started to consider the concept at the planning stage (ibid., p.9). Black describes her students as demonstrating "spinning plate syndrome" when working with the concept, having to balance different difficult skills in unison, "synthesis of evidence, critical thinking, application of contextual knowledge" (Black, 2012, p.38). Counsell warns that teachers can still fall for the content/concept misconception that dominated early conversation about the concept and shows how "misplaced details can fail to foster epistemic force within practical planning" (Counsell, 2011, p.219). Finally, Black (2012) argues that current literature about reasoning with similarity and difference is inadequate, resulting in a situation where pupils and teachers are uncertain about what they should be aiming for in terms of progression. She

calls for a more in-depth analysis of the scholarship of academic historians to determine a clearer framework for what we want students to achieve when they argue about similarity and difference and diversity.

From a multi-facetted array of critical literature, I was able to chart and understand the multiple different interpretations and conceptions of the similarity and difference as a concept. I was still curious though about my subconscious interpretation of the concept and the understanding of my students.

Rationale

Nature of the investigation

Literature by history teachers and history education researchers explores in detail teaching about similarity and difference, offering a wide range of practical principles that appear to enable students and teachers to work effectively with the concept. Yet, as Counsell, (2011), Black (2012) and McCrory (2013) make clear, using similarity and difference as a tool to frame knowledge is complex, and can lead to confusion and inconsistency at the planning stage. In addition, students can still easily fall into specific difficulties when attempting to reason analytically. These specific points resonate strongly with my own initial experiences of teaching lessons framed conceptually around similarity and difference. Yet I was still unclear exactly how to define the difficulties my students and I were facing when working with similarity and difference. Considering the focus within the literature on the 'mind maze' teachers often encounter, (McCory, 2013) I was curious about my conceptual assumptions and understanding of the topic at the teaching and planning stage, and how this appeared to manifest in my work. In addition, considering Black's (2012) emphasis on the difficulties students face in constructing written argument when reasoning about similarity and difference, I was curious about how they seemed to be arguing within their written work, as this could allow me to investigate their understanding. I was also curious about any other properties of historical thinking that manifested in their work, and how I could define this, and link it back to the principles advanced within critical literature.

In order to do this, my research would need to seek phenomenological truth (Van Manen, 1989). I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of subjective experience and understanding. I needed to

focus on more than just the effect of my teaching on pupils, as this would tell me nothing about my conceptions of teaching with the concept, nor the conceptions of my students when learning. My investigation into this research issue (Bassey, 1999) would need to be exploratory; (Yin, 1994) attempting to focus the issue by asking pertinent research questions, and consequently characterising themes (Van Manen, 1989) in my work and the work of my students.

As a result, I settled on the following research questions:

RQ1: What assumptions about similarity and difference as a concept was I operating with at the planning and teaching stage?

RQ2: What were my students arguing about?

RQ3: What properties of historical thinking manifested in their work?

In this sense, my research would be extremely reflective. By seeking to describe my own understanding of the concept at the planning and teaching stage, and in addition, the understanding of my students, I hoped to discern an evaluative set of themes. I could then take these forward and apply them towards the development of my subsequent practice. This aligns with one of the main purposes of teacher research, as advanced by Stenhouse (1975), Zeichner (1993) and Pollard (2005), that it can act as a means for reflective professional development. In conducting this research, I hoped primarily to better myself as a practitioner, and perhaps to define further questions for a subsequent study.

Context of the investigation

The study would be conducted with one Year 9, high attaining class consisting of 34 students. Students had two, hour-long history lessons a week. They had been studying a broadly chronological curriculum focused on key developments in twentieth-century world history, having just completed consecutive enquiries on the First and Second World Wars. Students had not been taught similarity and difference before, perhaps because of its perception as a difficult concept to teach and teach with. This would be vital to my investigation however, as their experience of similarity and difference would be fresh and unaffected by prior experiences. Seeing as my investigation is concerned with my own assumptions of teaching with the concept, my own context is also important. At the time of the investigation, I am approximately two-thirds through an initial teacher training (ITT) year, working towards a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). My own experience of planning and teaching with similarity and difference was similarly limited, my

only formal experience before the period of investigation was one full day 'subject studies' university seminar on the issue, the accompanying reading of some of the critical literature on the topic, and the planning and teaching of one interview lesson framed conceptually with similarity and difference.

Research Design

I have already explained the motive and goal of my research, to discern meaning in my assumptions and perceptions and those of the students that I teach. However, the next thing I needed to do was determine the type and design of research intended to discern this understanding.

Before I thought about the design of my research, it was important for me to consider the ethical dimensions of my investigation. My research project was undertaken following the ethical guidelines set out by the Faculty of Education, and by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). In addition, during the planning of my project I had discussed and agreed with my subject lecturer and school mentor. Bassey's (1990) discussion of ethics is centered around three criteria: respect for democracy, respect for truth, and respect for persons. He states that researchers have the democratic right to expect the freedom to ask questions, to express ideas and criticise the ideas of others, and to publish and disseminate their findings. However, he is clear that these freedoms are entirely conditional on researchers honouring the two additional criteria. In terms of respect for persons, I have altered the names of the students featured in my research in order to ensure anonymity, and to protect their privacy and dignity. Moreover, as Counsell (2018) notes, teachers face the "weighty ethical responsibility" of selecting which content to teach when designing and planning their curriculum, especially in KS3, where teachers are now free from the content obligations of national curricula. In terms of topic, my focus on the Holocaust aligns with the school's legal obligation to include a detailed focus on the event in their curriculum, as enshrined within the KS3 History Programmes of Study (2013). I would argue that my planning and the conceptual focus sitting behind my work does not deprive them of a comprehensive understanding but adds to it. With respect to the last of Bassey's criteria, respect for truth, it was important that I designed my investigation to ensure integrity and honesty. Counsell (2009b) argues that the researcher's subjective involvement in the process of interpretivist research does not necessarily lead to a diminishment of rigour providing the researcher utilises that subjective

involvement in several reflective and systematic ways to ensure respect for truth. The following are a number of overt and highly systematic ways I acted to ensure this respect.

Considering my goals and the formulation of my research questions, the nature of the knowledge that I was seeking was entirely subjective as I was seeking to understand lived experience rather than to explain an objective reality. I was seeking to conduct an in-depth investigation exploring, describing, and subjectively relating my actions and contributions and those of my students (Sturman, 1994; Bassey 1999). As a result, the research is interpretivist in its focus, because as a subject I need to interpret meaning in my object. A positivist approach, with quantitative data and experimental settings, would have been wholly inappropriate for this study as I was not seeking to uncover 'objective' truth, but instead to make tentative generalisations present within a single case (Yin, 1994). The type of data I collect was mainly qualitative, as this was the most appropriate to interpret understanding.

Sturman (1994) and Yin (1994) helped me focus on the type of in-depth investigation conducted. Sturman's description of a 'case study' as an investigation of a "group phenomenon" examining the "interdependencies of parts and the patterns that emerge" aligned with my desire to generalise themes within a single setting from a number of different data types (Sturman, 1994, p.61). This was refined further by Yin, who defines an exploratory case study as one attempting to discover theory by directly observing a social phenomenon in its "raw" form and from this drawing common themes from which to generalise (Yin, 1994, p.5).

Data Types

As I was seeking to identify broad and valid themes in order to make tentative generalisations, (Van Manen, 1997) I wanted to collect a sufficient amount of diverse types of data to establish reliability and validity by the method of triangulation (Yin, 1994). However, as a result of events outside of my control, both the type and amount of data was able to collect has been limited. However, I would argue that from the data I have collected, sufficient information exists for me to discern meaningful, accurate, and reliable themes. Each data type was selected based on its relationship with the specific research question (Table 1), and abbreviated when referenced in my discussion.

RQ1 was concerned with uncovering my assumptions and understanding of the concept, and so a wide range of data produced as a result of planning and teaching was explored to divulge this

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information. For example, there are a vast array of points and junctures within a completed lesson plan where the understanding of the teacher is evident; lesson objectives, medium-term planning points, points surrounding specific episodes of historical learning or interventions.

RQs 2&3 were concerned with the assumptions of students, and how these manifest in their written work and oral contributions. Therefore, any form where their understanding is evident is perfectly suitable for investigation, within their written work, either in the form of extended writing bookwork, lesson resources, or completed online distance learning packs.

Research question (RQ)	Types of data collected
RQ1: What assumptions about similarity and difference as a concept was I operating with at the planning and teaching stage?	Enquiry scheme of work, lesson plans (LP), lesson resources (LR), lesson evaluations (LE), mentor observation notes (LO)
RQ2: What were my students arguing about?	Students' written work (SW)
RQ3: What properties of historical thinking manifested in their work?	Students' written work (SW)

Table 1: The relationship between research questions and data types.

Data Analysis

As my research was exploratory, I had not yet defined certain and specific themes that I expected to divulge as a result of my investigations into the data. Therefore, I decided to follow (Taber, 2013) and conduct an inductive method of data analysis and establish data categories after collecting my research data, determining themes as they arose naturally. In doing this, I would avoid attempting to make my data fit into predetermined themes or categories and risk distortion. Van Manen's (1997) 'selective or highlighting approach' seemed naturally most appropriate for my investigation, as I was seeking to explore the data and revealing phrases that I felt would illuminate a number of thematic aspects. From these themes, I then derived analytic statements (Bassey, 1999) across all data sets to answer my research questions. Van Manen (1990) argues that no single statement can capture the entire subjective 'mystery' of any experience, it will always be a reduction. However, analytical statements can allow us to give "shape to the shapeless" (Van Manen, 1990, p.88) and allow the researcher to discern demonstrable meaning from the phenomenon being investigated.

Overview of the Teaching Sequence

The class's upcoming substantive focus on the Holocaust was brimming with potent opportunities to frame knowledge conceptually using similarity and difference. A significant portion of modern scholarship on the event is dedicated to studying the experiences of different groups affected. Within his reflection on the historiography of the Holocaust, Marrus (1994) criticises universalist "hedgehog" historians such as Hillberg (1985) and Arendt (1951) who claim comprehensive knowledge on the origins of the Holocaust by studying the experiences of one group, the Jews. He calls for a different, "panoramic approach" to historical enquiry, calling for the careful analysis of the relationships between the lived experiences of a number of oppressed and marginalised groups (Marrus, 1992, pp.92, 104) In this vein, Mbabuike and Evans argue that a "synchronic" analysis of experiences of different groups within the Holocaust can yield a more comprehensive understanding of its origins (Mbabuike & Evans, 2000, p.6). They state histories focusing on the experiences of single groups "might be essential to explain specific events, but without the larger context, their practice sees only the trees and not the forest." (Mbabuike & Evans, 2000, pp.6 - 7).

What interested me most about this theme within the historiography of the Holocaust was the argument that the comparisons between the lived experiences of different groups can help better elucidate greater *meaning* behind the rapid, clamorous, and potentially unintelligible nature of the event as a whole. The Centre for Holocaust Education identifies a myriad of misconceptions and inaccuracies in students' understanding of the Holocaust. For example, the overwhelming majority of students surveyed recognised Jews as victims of the Holocaust, but were largely unfamiliar with the unique experiences of different groups, such as gay men, Jehovah's witnesses, Roman and Sinti people, or disabled people and the particular policies enacted against them and the specific reasons for their persecution (Foster et al., 2016). Furthermore, students were consistently unable to explain the Holocaust. Where students attempted to identify causes they overwhelmingly did so with a general and vague reference to Hitler and/or 'the Nazis.' (Foster et al., 2016). In an explorative study, attempting to investigate understanding, The Centre for Holocaust Education explore no causal factors to explain these misconceptions, but surely a chronological approach to teaching, focusing solely on the experiences of one group, can hinder a more comprehensive understanding of the *meaning* of the Holocaust. An array of history teachers propose principles to teach the Holocaust more effectively (Kinloch, 1999; Pettigrew, 2010; Salmons 2010; Foster, 2011), and an

overriding theme within this literature is the inclusion of alternative, more diverse experiences and an analysis of the way that these experiences, and interpretations of these experiences, compare.

The focus was then full of opportunities to enable students to consider the complexities behind generalisation. I wanted to invite their quick assumptions, and then enable them to elucidate the true meaning behind the Holocaust and the experiences of different groups.

I developed a sequence of seven 60-minute lessons (Table 2) based on the enquiry question "What did it mean to be a *victim* of the Holocaust?".

EQ: What did it mean to be a *victim* of the Holocaust?	
Lesson Question	**Learning Objectives**
L1: *Who lived in the Nazi Ghettos?*	***Define*** substantive concepts key to the enquiry, such as the *Holocaust* and a 'victim'. ***Identify*** the various different individuals and social groups persecuted by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. ***Highlight*** tentative similarities and differences between these groups.
L2: *Did all Jews go like "Sheep to the Slaughter"*	***Explain*** some of the reasons for, extent, and nature of Nazi persecution. ***Identify*** the interpretation of Jewish victims as 'passive receivers' ***Challenge*** this interpretation through a close focus on alternative interpretations of Jewish victims of 'active resistors', and information about different groups of Jews, such as the Jewish Fighting Organization, and individuals such as Morderchai Aneilwicz.
L3: *How did the Nazi's treat the other enemies of the race-based state?*	***Identify*** the experiences of other "enemies of the race-based state". ***Compare*** the reasons for their persecution between different groups. ***Categorise*** the different Nazi laws based on the overall effect they had on people's lives.
L4: *Who did the Nazi's think was living a life unworthy of life?*	***Identify*** the reasons for and nature of the persecution of different disabled people by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust. ***Understand*** the differences between the extent and nature of the persecution of different disabled people during the Holocaust. ***Express*** a judgement about what "it meant to a disabled victim of the Holocaust"
L5: *What did it mean to be Gay during Nazi rule?*	***Identify*** the reasons behind the persecution of homosexuals under the Third Reich. ***Describe*** the persecution of Gay Men and Women. ***Compare*** the experiences of these two groups.
L6: *What did it mean to be Black in the Third Reich?*	***Identify*** the reasons behind the persecution of Black people. ***Classify*** the varied experience of persecution of different Black people in Germany. ***Compare*** the experiences of these two groups.
L7: *Assessment Lesson*	

Table 2: Lesson sequence

I wanted to allow students to first consider the complexity behind the notion of a *victim*, and one of the Holocaust, and then use each lesson to identify commonalities and connections between the experiences of different groups, building back up their idea of what it meant to be a victim of the

Holocaust, where I hoped they would use these experiences as evidence in forceful, 'buzzing' argument. It is worth noting here that again, as a result of events outside of my control, I was unable to physically teach the last four lessons. They did however continue in the form of distance learning packs, yielding usable and important data, with a limited amount of outcome data. Despite the format change, the lesson objectives, content, and episodes of historical learning remained largely the same from the object of my initial planning. During the planning stage of the lesson sequence, I took time to explicitly plan out the lesson content and the activities that I believed would enable students to think conceptually using similarity and difference (Appendix 1).

Findings

RQ1: What assumptions about similarity and difference as a concept was I operating with at the planning and teaching stage?

I was initially unsure the extent to which my subjective assumptions would be evident within the enquiry scheme of work, lesson plans, lesson resources, lesson evaluations and mentor observation notes; yet, after an intensive course reading and selective highlighting, this data proved fertile ground, divulging a fascinating array of common themes. From these common themes, I was able to produce a number of analytic statements (**AS**) (Bassey, 1999) which I labelled with a set of numbers.

AS100: I assumed at the analytical heart of the concept was the issue of breaking apart generalisations.

AS200: I was unclear about what detailed and rigorous analytical reasoning with similarity and difference looked like, and this manifested when I asked students to reason with the concept.

AS300: I believed if students had enough knowledge about different people or groups, then the ability to analyse effectively and rigorously would come naturally, without specific intervention or scaffolding.

AS400: I saw it as important to guide and structure students' reasoning on a medium-term, enquiry wide planning level.

AS500: I assumed that to allow students to analyse similarity and difference rigorously, they needed different types of substantive knowledge**.**

A prominent theme that became apparent to me early on in my analysis was my focus on the enticing 'puzzle' of breaking apart generalisations. Within my second lesson on Jewish resistance (Table 2), I introduced students first to the provocative interpretation of Bettelheim (1960), and then within my line of questioning appeared to invite their speculation, creating the need for them to break his generalisation apart; *"What do we think of Bettelheim's pretty controversial argument? Does it make some of you feel emotional, angry? Do you think it is necessarily true? Do you want it to be true?"* (LP2003). At various points throughout the lesson sequence, I appeared to invite students to make their own, easy or sloppy assumptions. For example, during my first lesson I goaded students' assumptions about the exclusivity of the Jewish experience to the Holocaust by asking them "*Who lived in the Nazi Ghettos?"* (LR1001), intending to illuminate the complexity and variation among the different groups persecuted by breaking apart this generalisation. It is clear from this that I assumed the issue of breaking apart generalisations to illuminate complexity and variation a core issue to the teaching of similarity and difference.

Through iterative re-readings of the data, a further theme that emerged was my misunderstanding on the concept, specifically my consistent inability to realise what detailed analytical reasoning about similarity and difference looked like. Where I had planned to ask students to reason analytically with similarity and difference, and to express that analysis in class, I had done so with a demonstrable lack of clarity, signifying my misunderstanding and insecurity with the concept. My lesson plans were rife with obscure, vague language such as *"How can we compare…"* (LP2003) or "*In discerning contrasting ways…"* (LP3001) wherever I prompted students to reason analytically. My use of vague, imprecise verbs such as 'compare' and 'discern' without a corresponding clarity about the object of their analysis revealed a lack of clarity in my thinking about what such analysis should look like. This was also evident in the formulation of my lesson objectives, which consistently contained yet more 'fuzzy' command verbs such as *"Explain"* (LP2001) or the reprehensible "*Understand"* (LP4001). My vigilant mentor articulated perfectly the issue with these lesson objectives within her observation: "*Is understanding an achievable lesson objective? What do you actually want students to do or think about the differences in persecution and their judgment?"* (LO5). To answer her question, I was not sure, and this insecurity manifested consistently when I appeared to consider how students would actually reason with the concept.

My analysis also illuminated another crucial misunderstanding behind my teaching. I believed if students had enough knowledge about different people or groups, then the ability to analyse effectively and rigorously would come naturally, without specific intervention or scaffolding. Reading my lesson plans made it apparent to me that within my teaching the building of knowledge was framed separately to the act of analysis. I discussed the adding of *"substantive knowledge and points of understanding"*, (LP3001) or the gathering of *"information about different groups…through the primary themes of comparison: reasons for persecution, extent, and nature of persecution"* (LP4001) as standalone tools to aid subsequent analysis. The concept was not framed centrally, but as the assumed logical consequence of an amassing of factual knowledge on the part of my students. This assumption was evident in the lack of time I spent scaffolding complicated reasoning before asking them to articulate their thoughts in the form of extended writing. For example, within my first lesson, immediately after students had taken part in a fruitful card-sort activity divulging the variation and complexity among the experiences of different groups persecuted as part of the Holocaust, I appeared to intervene with a task requiring them to make connections between the groups, with no scaffolding or direct instruction whatsoever (LR6). Again, my mentor highlighted the issue in her lesson observation, asking *"Could you have explained historical simm/difference before the 'arrows/labels' to support more nuanced/challenging arguments?"* (LO2). In fact, the first time I explicitly attempted to scaffold students thinking about similarity and difference was within our last distance learning 'lesson', just before they completed a written assessment, and it again was simply through a set of fairly simple *"sentence starters"* (DL3002). It was becoming increasingly evident that I was operating with severe deficiencies in my understanding and assumptions around teaching with similarity and difference.

Yet, my analysis also revealed several prominent assumptions about the teaching of similarity and difference that were extremely proactive and demonstrated to at least some extent, a sound understanding of the practicalities of teaching with the concept. I saw it as important to guide students' thinking about the concept with several medium-term and enquiry wide devices. For example, I used the enquiry question consistently throughout the sequence as a guide for students to make iterative judgements towards the same overarching question: 'What did it mean to be a victim?'. I constantly referred back to the enquiry question within lessons, such as immediately after dissecting the provocative depiction of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust within the second lesson, asking the class *"How does this picture add to our understanding of what it meant to be a victim of the Holocaust?"* (LP2002). Within a lesson observation, my mentor highlighted the

consistent reference to prior work and the enquiry question focus *"...woven throughout the lesson"* (LO5).

In addition, in attempting to structure and guide students' thinking about similarity and differences between the different groups, I ensured running through each lesson were three primary thematic categories of judgement: Why were these people persecuted? How much were these people persecuted, and what did this persecution look like? How did these people react to this persecution? This focus was especially clear within the 'medium-term planning context' sections of my lesson plans, where I consistently referred to this focus: "*This lesson will focus on the first minority group, the European Jewry, and ask questions of how they reacted to the persecution of the Holocaust"/ "This will allow students to generalise mostly under the primary theme of 'reaction to persecution'."* (LP2001).

In addition, evident within the data was an assumption that to allow students to analyse rigorously about similarity and difference, they needed different types of more substantive knowledge. At numerous points I prompted students to consider the similarities and differences within groups of people, in addition to against these groups; such as during my last lesson on the black experience of the Holocaust, where I prompted students to consider what *"the lived experiences of these different individuals tell us about black people were targeted…what can their shared experiences tell us as historians? What do these experiences have in common, where are they different?"* (DL2003).

Moreover, I presented students with information on different 'layers' of resolution, including detailed focus on specific individual case studies. During the third lesson in my sequence on the experiences of other religious or ethnic groups, I included explicit focus on individuals, evident in my planned lesson intervention: "What can the oral testimony of Franz Wolfhart tell us about why JW's were persecuted by the Nazis? What was the reason for their suffering?" (LP3002).

RQ2: What were students arguing about?

I was curious about the substance of the students' argument when discussing the lived experiences of people in the past. I wanted to determine how they naturally conceptualised the process of reasoning with similarity and difference, and the nature of comparison they seemed to privilege above others. Analysis of my students' classwork, distance learning work, and outcome activity

writing yielded several interesting themes, which I was able to characterise within the following analytical statements:

AS600: Some students failed to conceptualise the task as one concerned with argument.

AS700: Students overwhelmingly privileged comparison at a group level.

AS800: Some students privileged simple substantive comparison, making use of various thematic categories.

AS900: Some students argued conceptually about similarity or difference.

AS1000: There was significant variation in the location of argumentation within their written work.

Some students appeared to fail to conceptualise the task as one concerned with argument. The opening statement of Aleena's outcome extended writing piece was indicative of a common theme in some of my students' work, where she appeared to make a general statement, ignoring the complexity and variation I had assumed we had worked hard as a class to unpick and illuminate: *"To be a victim of the Holocaust is to be a minority group who the Nazis are against, and who they deem impure and who they think needs to be purified, sterilised, killed or tortured."* (SW1001). As far as she was concerned, along with a number of her peers, there was no argument to be had. This misunderstanding was evident where students made general statements, ignoring complexity, immediately after activities where they had seemingly divulged and reasoned with variation. After an activity during the fourth lesson in the scheme designed specifically to illuminate the very different experiences that people with different types of disability had during the Holocaust, Masroor stated simply that *"Being a disabled person during the Holocaust would have been hard. They were tortured, killed, beaten and more for something that wasn't their fault"* (SW31). Perhaps inherent in the students' work was not laziness, nor a refusal to engage in difficult and high-level conceptual thinking, but a genuine unawareness of any need to be arguing about similarity and difference.

Despite this, through iterative reading and re-reading of my data, it became gradually clear that a substantial number of students were arguing about similarity and difference in their work. The most interesting aspect of my investigation was determining the nature of reasoning that they appeared to

be engaging with. It appeared that the type of comparison was overwhelmingly substantive, making comparisons between groups, guided by a number of different substantive categories.

For example, Sufyan's work was full of comparison made at a comfortable 'middle level', making substantive connections between groups: "*The reason for prosecution to the disabled group were more or less identical to the reasons of why black people were persecuted*" (SW3001). This theme appeared consistently in students' work; Ihti again appearing to privilege group-level comparison by stating that *"The way in which the members of the LGBTQ plus community were persecuted was different from the way the Jews were persecuted"* (SW10).

Only occasionally did students seem to stray away from this middle level. Emma appeared to be operating on a different resolution of generalisation by stating that **"***To a large extent the reasons for why and how black people's persecution was very similar to the ethnic and religious people's persecution…*" (SW6001). She appeared to utilise a meta grouping of "*ethnic and religious people's*" to include a number of different religious and ethnic groups that we had studied, such as Romani and Sinti, Jews, and Jehovah's Witnesses. In contrast, later in his essay, Ihti appeared to *zoom in*, utilising the experiences of a specific individual in his argument by stating that *"Some people say that the Jews…were like lambs to the slaughter…But there were some resistance fighters such as Mordechai Anielwicz."* (SW10). Or Haider, who appeared to be attempting to break apart simple generalisation by stating that *"However, it does not always go down like this. On one occasion, a man, known as boy AA because of his real identify being lost, was caught by Nazi police"* (SW25) Sitting behind Ihti's statement, and Haider's colloquial "*it does not always go down like this*" is a clear and forceful argument where they use the plasticity of individual experience to break apart simple generalisation and a group level.

Guiding these generalisations, students levelled comparison using a number of substantive thematic categories. For example, many students, such as Javaira, who stated that *"Black people were targeted as they weren't seen as 'pure'…/…Hitler believed homosexuals (especially gay men) were impure…"* (SW2001) compared the similarities or differences in the different reasons for Nazi persecution, with many focusing on the central idea of Nazi 'purity'. Similarly, students also commonly compared the nature and type of persecution faced by different groups, commenting on specific forms of racially motivated violence, such as Maliha, who stated that *"Some groups were persecuted the same way as another, but others weren't. For example, people with disabilities were*

sterilised and institutionalised, and the majority of the Jews were executed for their beliefs" (SW9001). These substantive categories overwhelmingly guided students' arguments.

Encouraging though these themes were, it was clear that students felt most comfortable making simple substantive comparison. I wanted to re-read my data to illuminate the nature of the conceptual reasoning students were engaging with. If we deem similarity and difference as a distinct historical concept, then students' reasoning must go beyond making simple substantive comparison.

Occasionally students appeared to be arguing conceptually, commenting on the extent, nature, and significance of similarity or difference. Danny appeared to be thinking carefully about the extent of comparison, seeming to consider the concept of similarity or difference along a continuum of judgement, stating that *"The reasons why Jews were executed was more or less similar to why members of LGBTQ+ or partly why disabled were persecuted"* (SW4001). Similarly, Sufyan stated that "*These ways are partially similar to the persecution of Black people"* (SW3001). The use of tentative language such as *"more or less", "partly",* or *"partially"* was indicative of conceptual reasoning students were engaging in, attempting to determine the extent of comparison.

In addition, students appeared to be carefully considering the nature of a 'difference', making extensive use of difference against, but also commenting more abstract forms, such as difference within. This was a common theme where students discussed the persecution of homosexuals during the Holocaust. In some students' work, students considered homosexuals as one homogenous group, comparing their experience against the experiences of others, such as Shannon, who stated that *"During the Nazi regime, homosexuals were treated disgustingly ways include…"* (SW8001). However, a great number of students appeared to break apart the simple category, and argue about the differences within, comparing the difference in nature and extent of persecution suffered by Gay men and women; with Ihti stating that *"homosexual women had an experience unlike the men*" (SW10), or Emma arguing that "*To a big extent…gay men and lesbians women were treated differently"* (SW6001). For these students, their conceptual understanding of a difference was not rigid and set, but fluid and highly versatile, able to be realigned where they saw interesting comparison within predetermined categories.

Through reading and re-reading my data, it became clear that some students were taking their analysis of similarity and difference further than their peers. These students appeared to be using substantive comparison to make inferential generalisations about a given topic, generating genuine and complex historical meaning in the form of argument. For example, after arguing about the substantive differences in extent and nature of their suffering, Safir stated that *"For the minority of groups that were persecuted, the extent of their suffering and punishments they endured ranged depending on how valuable they were and what the Nazis claimed they were doing"* (SW7001). Safir appeared to be using his reasoning about the similarities and differences between the experiences of different groups to infer that persecution in the Holocaust differed based on individual value to the ruling regime. This theme was apparent in the work of several other students. Ihti stated that "*The law against homosexuality was aimed only towards men, so really a judge had no power to prosecute a woman…/Also some of the women were valued workers and the Nazis needed women to have children to contribute…so they wouldn't have been imprisoned."* (SW10). He again appears to be using difference, specifically the difference in persecution between gay men and women, to suggest that persecution differed based on individual value. This type of reasoning is certainly abstract and conceptual, and perhaps offers an interesting way forward for ensuring rigorous and deeply historical use of the concept as a tool for generating interpretation and making meaning from the past.

Finally, aside from the substance of their argument, there was significant variation in the location and form of argumentation within students' written work. Through iterative reading and re-reading of my data, I was able to characterise four distinct structures manifesting in students' work, which I had discussed and appear below in several figures. The colours within these figures are only used to represent differences between parts of each sentence, and do not align to a central key. Annotation is used to label the different parts of each sentence, and these labels are discussed further in the text.

The most coherent arguments about similarity and difference were made neatly within punchy and forceful single sentences, often deployed as points within a standard 'point, evidence, explain' (PEE) paragraph structure. In a 'basic self-contained comparative point', Mohammad (Figure 1) made comparative judgements about either a similarity or a difference between two or more separate objects in self-contained sentences.
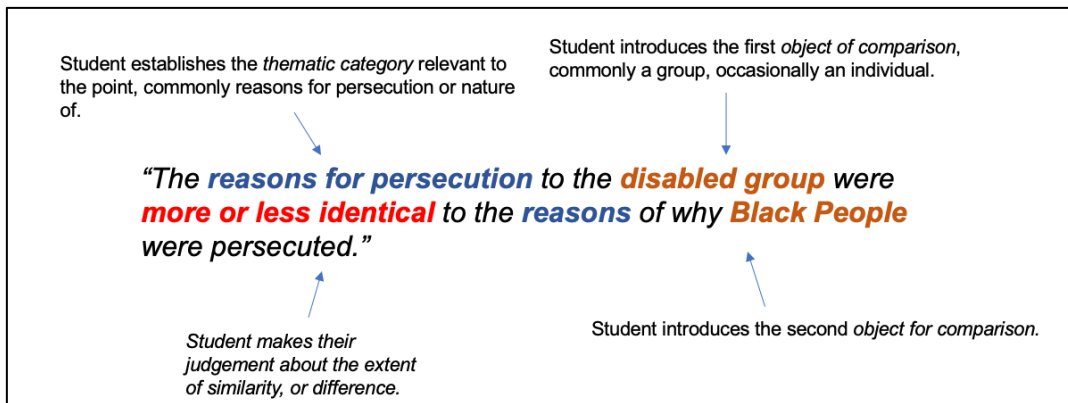
Figure 1: A basic self-contained comparative point.
Present in SW10, SW3001, SW2002, SW4001, SW6001, SW18, SW26, SW28, SW29, SW43

In comparison, Aaminah's (Figure 2) opening point was much more complex, demonstrating a tentative comparative judgement, indicating both similarities and differences between two or more objects in a self-contained sentence, perhaps demonstrating a more embedded understanding of variation and complexity
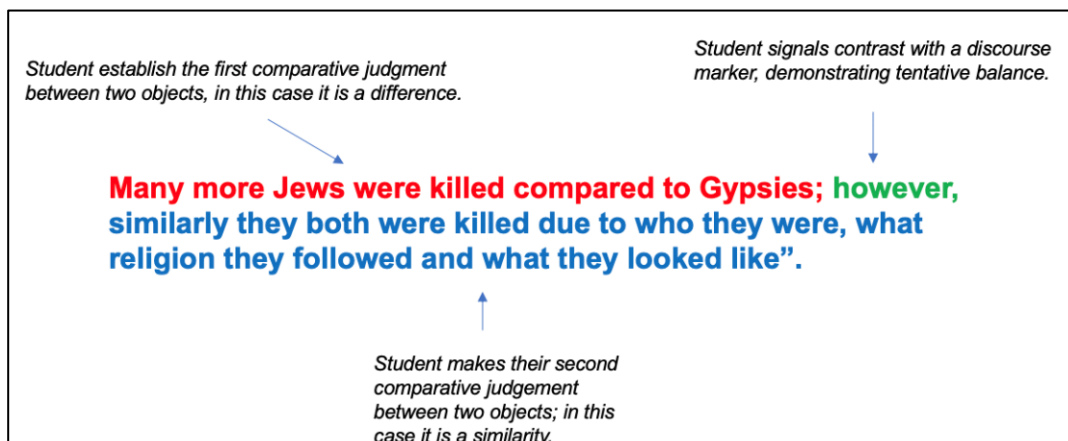

Figure 2: A complex self-contained comparative point.
Present in SW7001, SW8001

Students' argument about similarity and difference did not always manifest this coherently, and commonly arguments were spread less explicitly across paragraphs or extended pieces of writing. For example, Emma's (Figure 3) 'general point guided comparison' was spread over a whole paragraph, where she appeared to link the experiences of two groups together under one vague and general point. This argument appears far less coherent, perhaps reflecting both a misunderstanding about a 'best practice', scaffolded approach to comparing forcefully, or the fact that she was not

clear about her point of comparison before she started writing, and that thoughts about comparison came linearly as she wrote, in a 'one after the other' fashion.
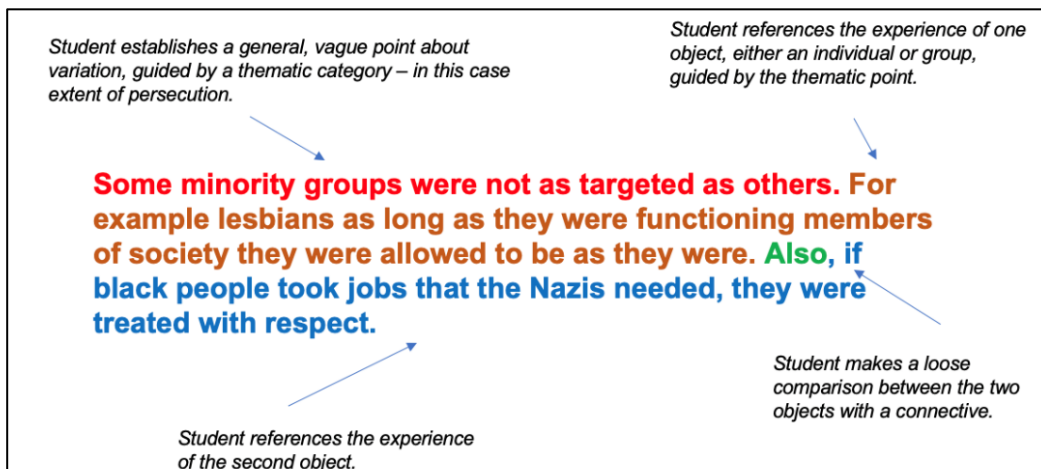

Figure 3: A general point guided comparison.
Present in SW9001, SW1001

Similarly, in making a 'bolt on' comparison, Humsa (Figure 4) made a comparative point about one group or individual dropped immediately after an extended description of the experiences of another, again using a simple connective such as "*also", "this was similar/different too".* This comparison is less explicit and forceful, again signifying a lack of scaffolded practice or 'joined-up thinking' about similarity and difference before she came to write her ideas down. This was by far the most common structural form of an argument about similarity and difference manifesting in students' work.
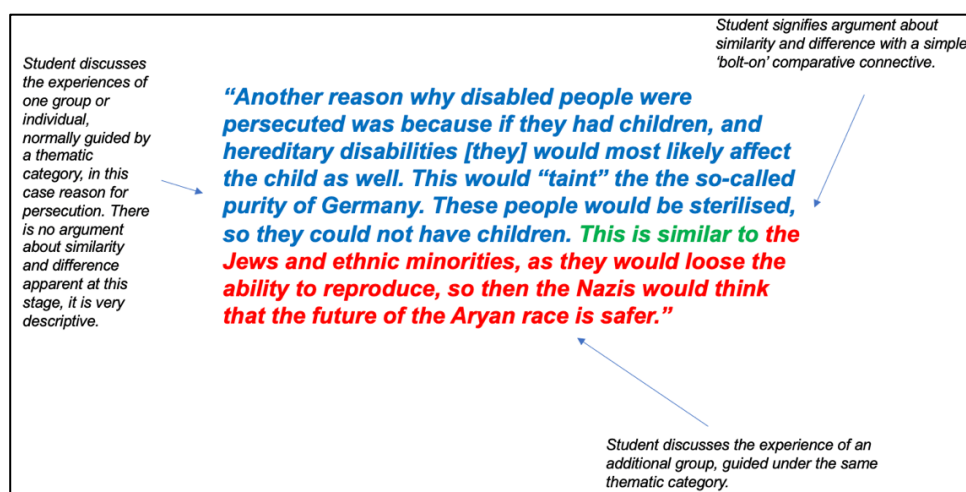

Figure 4: A 'bolt-on' comparative point.
Present in SW5001, SW10, SW1200, SW15, SW2001, SW22, SW27, SW29

Thus, students' arguments about similarity and difference manifested in a number of different ways. On the one hand, students made forceful arguments, demonstrating secure and formed understanding, and on the other students' arguments were spread across paragraphs, incoherent, and demonstrated misconception and a lack of understanding.

RQ3: What properties of historical thinking manifested in their work?

Student data yielded a fascinating array of surprising additional properties of historical thinking, which I was able to characterise with the following analytical statements:

AS1000: Students substantiated their arguments with evidence, forming PEE paragraph structures.

AS1200: At times, students stepped entirely out of historical prose.

Students felt the need to substantiate their arguments about similarity and difference with a wide array of supporting evidence. They seemed to deploy reference to the experiences of individuals as evidence to their comparative points, for example when discussing the differences in the Black experience of the Holocaust, Karol stated that *"Hans Hauck, a black man born in Germany and forcibly sterilised, still wanted to support Hitler…"* (SW12001). In addition, students referenced specific pieces of primary source evidence to similarly substantiate their points; Sabriya stated that **"***The Nazis liked to make joke out the things they were doing to black people, and other groups, by making caricatures of the people they were targeting…***"**, (SW9001) referencing a specific propaganda poster she had dissected previously. In some cases, the use of evidence was obscured, or lacking clarity, such as Javaira, stating that *"There are two cases which had been reported of two different women having intimate relationships, but they were both not sent to prison or any punishment done to them."* (SW2001). Yet, despite the loose, obscured reference to specific evidence, it is clear that students still felt it necessary to substantiate their points with evidence, forming PEE paragraphs.

When making points, a substantial number of students used various different examples of 'meta language' to discuss and comment on the points they were making, stepping entirely out of analytical or historical prose, making explicit comparisons with present-day values and circumstances, or making their own moral judgment clear. In making a point about the black experience of the Holocaust, Matty felt the need to premise it with *"As we learned in our history*

lesson, there was a poster…" (SW4001), or when Jillian qualified a similar point about the extent of racism in Nazi society; *"They were not treated like humans and were made to feel ashamed of the colour of their skin, which nowadays doesn't make a difference".* By using such language, students' own subjective selves were present, commenting and discussing the points they were making, feeling the persistent need to include this in their own written work.

Similarly, another overwhelmingly persistent theme emerging from the data was the students' casual presentation of their own moral judgement. Amaan's extended writing outcome activity was packed with this type of language (SW4001/SW4002); where he stated that *"Jews were put into concentration camps, in gas chambers and in all sorts of evil torture".* In a general point about the victims' experience, Milani stated *that "The reasons that they did this are unjust…all of these people were treated unfairly, and they didn't deserve to be persecuted."* (SW9002). Samar stated that *"What Black people experienced during the Holocaust was pure racist and cruel…"* (SW12001). It was clear that students had felt compelled, for some reason, to exercise their own moral judgement. I had not asked for this judgement, nor had I encountered this issue before, and whatever was behind the students work, it certainly was not a rigorous analysis of similarity and difference.

Discussion: What types of knowledge do students need to work effectively with similarity and difference as a concept?

The analysis of my data and subsequent characterisation of prominent themes highlighted a fascinating array of points for discussion, with clear resonances with other points from professional literature. I will attempt to summarise these points below, making tentative recommendations, both for my own practice, and for further curricular theorising, which I will briefly summarise at the end.

I should have predicted the issues around my assumptions when working with the concept divulged by my analysis, as these are warned about specifically in literature. McCory (2013, p.9) specifically states that "thinking with this knowledge and the resulting intellectual maturation does not happen automatically through the amassing of detail". Yet, my data suggests that I was certainly operating with this assumption at the planning and teaching stage. Each lesson activity was more concerned with the building or 'amassing' of detailed substantive knowledge, and less with specifically scaffolding students' conceptual reasoning.

In addition, the vague allusions and inconsistencies in my own expressions of how I wanted students to reason with the concept was again indicative own my own misunderstanding. My use of vague command verbs such as *'explain', 'compare'* or *'understand'* to subconsciously subvert the need to realise and define the specific conceptual thinking I was requiring students to engage in aligns perfectly with the criticism of command verbs outlined by Fordham (2017). He argues that these words are redundant in the context of subject disciplines and offer no indication whatsoever of the processes of analytical reasoning required to 'explain', 'compare' or 'understand'. The crucial reflective opportunity that this investigation offers has allowed me to think more carefully about the analytical reasoning students need to practice and engage in to argue effectively about similarity and difference, and this is indicative in my continuing planning using the concept. For example, the learning objectives for a subsequent lesson with a different class where I wanted to enable students to argue about the similarities and differences between the causes, aims, methods and success of both the Bristol and Montgomery Bus Boycotts demonstrate an obviously clearer, structured and consequently more effective understanding of the concept (Table 3).

Lesson Question: What did it mean to be Black in Montgomery and Bristol?
Group different pieces of substantive information about actor's experiences of racism and their local context based on comparisons of similarity or difference.
Characterise these comparisons by assigning tested general statements as labels.
Articulate these comparisons using structured and scaffolded analytical language.

Table 3: Revised learning objectives

During my lessons on the Holocaust, I often asked students to simply "compare" the experience of different groups, and as discussed, consequently failed to enable them to access the very specific procedural skills required to actually make comparison. In the lesson objectives here, these procedural skills are central to my lesson objectives, such as organising or 'grouping' information into similar or different categories, describing or 'characterizing' these similarities or differences by labelling them with general statements, and expressing or 'articulating' these comparative statements using vocabulary to describe the nature and extent of similarity or difference. In explicitly distinguishing between the different system of skills required, my students are more able to compare.

Students need teachers to be aware that reasoning effectively with this concept requires consistent and detailed iterative practice, that substantive knowledge must always be framed analytically, flowing through the heart of the concept.

Students' difficulty in conceptualising tasks as specifically concerned with argument, and the inconsistency in the location and structure of their argumentation align with concerns about the synthesis of argument highlighted in the literature. Black (2012) highlighted a similar lack of critical awareness in the work of her students, where they fell into the "predicted traps" of over-simplification and generalisation, failing to break apart the diversity of the experiences of people that co-existed in the past (p.36). The resonance between her findings and my own is striking, and points to a systematic issue with students' ability to construct arguments when working with similarity and difference. Black cites Carr (1961) who defines historical argument as 'hard core of interpretations surrounded by a pulp of disputable facts' (p.27) Perhaps students' difficulty in even realising that there was an argument to be had was a result of a lack of exposure during the teaching phase to the deeply disputable nature of making general statements comparing people in the past. The process of contesting these facts helps students conceptualise and synthesise complex interpretations that they are ready to argue coherently when it comes to a point of extended writing. Black points to a considerable body of work by a number of authors (Banham, 1998; Woodcock, 2005; Evans & Pate, 2007) who have worked hard to promote students' written causal arguments, but states that considerably less attention has been improving argument driven by similarity and difference.

Students seemed to eagerly use the substantive thematic categories that I attempted to reinforce in my teaching, such as the causes and nature of persecution. McCrory (2013) states that her use of these categories equipped students with the language to conceive and label nascent generalisations about comparing people in the past. My analysis reinforces this conclusion, that students' arguments about similarity and difference are strengthened when they are guided by substantive categories.

Students' attempts to reason conceptually with similarity and difference highlight yet more resonances with the concerns and points raised in the professional literature. McCrory (2013, p.12) states that the "tension" between making similarity and difference judgements at an individual level and a group level seems under-probed in the professional literature. It was interesting to observe in my analysis the natural intersection in students' work between discussing variation at a group level, and including the experiences of specific individuals, or more general meta groups in their arguments, switching between different 'vantage points' where it suited their argument. The cases of specific individuals were interestingly overwhelmingly used to justify points about difference,

where students seemed to be using the cases of individuals to break apart simple generalisations about groups of people as victims in the Holocaust.

When students were commenting on the extent and nature of difference, they appeared to be using regularly a stock set of analytical and tentative 'hedging' phrases such as *'to some extent', "more or less', 'partly'* or *'partially'.* A great deal of curricular thinking has been devoted to the role of analytical language in both enabling students to structure and articulate complicated conceptual reasoning (Woodcock, 2005; Foster, 2015; Carroll, 2016). The students' use of this language can point to their own emerging ideas of similarity and difference as a concept. The use of this highly tentative language demonstrates that some students consider argument about similarity and difference to be highly tentative, and that judgment, as in other conceptual areas of historical enquiry, must be made on a spectrum, and not as binary oppositions. These students go beyond a simple understanding of people's lived experiences as being 'the same' or 'different', but that this variation can be expressed by commenting on the degree, extent, and nature of similarity or difference. Perhaps more structured intervention and activities focusing on the application of analytical language can allow students to think carefully about how to reason more effectively and with greater resolution about the conceptual nature of comparison.

In addition, it was encouraging to see students considering more abstract, conceptual forms of variation, such as difference within, and noticing where and how to apply this form of reasoning to enhance their argument about the past. Black (2012) argues that there is considerable space for more curricular theorising to develop tools for categorisation and judgement, including degree, or variation against and within. My analysis highlighted the ability for students to consider variation within larger groups of people, using the experiences of people to break apart generalisations in the form of larger group labels, such as 'homosexuals'. In her study, Black comments that students had not been trained think about diversity in these terms, and the manifestation of this thinking in their writing was inconsistent. It is clear from my analysis however that the students in my study felt comfortable discussing and arguing about variation within.

The re-occurring theme of students using their substantive analysis of similarity and difference to make inferential historical statements about topics present an interesting, and perhaps under-explored route for conceptual progression. The work of theorists such as Black (2012) and McCrory (2013) greatly supplement our understanding of how to enable students to recognise variation and

express it with deep levels of conceptual rigour, but perhaps students' argument can become increasingly historical if they are encouraged to use variation in lived experience to generate further historical meaning. For example, in my analysis, students had made the basic, substantive comparison between the levels of persecution faced by gay men and women during the Holocaust, but then used that variation to make an inference that persecution differed based on individual value to the Nazi regime. Perhaps students can be trained to generate complex historical meaning through layers of inference, starting with simple statements of variation, and building these up to increasingly complex general statements, asking what variation between people's experience can tell us about the nature of their contexts. For example, Figure 5 demonstrates the potential for a highly conceptual and complex historical argument, utilising a basic recognition of similarity at an individual level to build complicated layers of inference, offering genuine historical meaning behind the Holocaust.

> Both *[Individual]*, a disabled person and [individual], a black person were sterilised by the Nazis during the holocaust. → On the whole, disabled people and black people faced the routine threat of state enforced sterlisation. → The Nazis viewed the reproduction and continuity of their race as unacceptable. → The Nazis had a fannatical obsession with the concept of 'racial purity' and the protection of the Aryan German race.

Figure 5: The potential for a highly conceptual and complex historical argument building inferences from basic substantive comparison

Perhaps there is space for practical pedagogical strategies to ingrain this as a systematic process that can be scaffolded and taught as an efficient method of conceptual reasoning, so that students could become proficient in it.

Black (2012, p.39) argues that her findings highlight a lack of clear theoretical models for potential progression for the concept of similarity and difference, to the extent in which "pupils (and practitioners) are uncertain what it is they should be aiming for when building arguments about historical diversity." Based on my exploration of the different ways students seemed to explore and demonstrate conceptual reasoning, I have devised (see Table 4, next page). an extremely tentative progression model, defining in greater detail a number of 'signposts' for reasoning, and what emerging, developed, and mastered work within each signpost looks like.

Signpost	Emergent	Developing	Mastered
Signpost 1 Making connections	*Students make simple "similar/different" connections between basic, overt characteristics of people in the past,.*	*Students are able to make connections based on the extent and nature of similarity/difference, comparing more implicit characteristics*	*Students make complex comparisons between different people in the past, routinely comparing the nature and extent of similarity or difference in implicit features of lived experience.*
Signpost 2 Use of substantive connections to make inferences about more general enquiries.	*Students are able to use analysis of similarity and difference to present a diverse picture of the past.*	*Students are able to piece together common themes, making tentative historical claims about given enquiries using analysis of similarity and difference between groups.*	*Students employ forcefully their analysis of similarity and difference between different groups as evidence to substantiate historical claims about the past, deriving inferential generalisations.*
Signpost 3 Exploration of different forms of comparison.	*Students rely on simple substantive categorisations to compare group against group.*	*Students start to recognise the transience of simple categorisation when arguing about the past, seeing variation within.*	*When making arguments about the past, students use both comparison against and within to argue specifically about the extent of similarity and difference.*
Signpost 4 Exploration of different 'vantage points.'	*Students make simple comparisons, referencing indirectly substantive details about lived experience, generalising about groups.*	*Students refer to the experiences of individuals, but do not employ these experiences to argue specifically about similarity or differences between other individuals.*	*Students compare directly the experiences of individual case studies with other individuals, using this as evidence to justify complex comparison.*

Table 4: A highly tentative progression model for reasoning with similarity and difference.

Students use of evidence to substantiate their arguments, and the place of this evidence within PEE paragraph structures perhaps highlight students' previously ingrained ideas about standardised paragraph structures developed by teachers such as Banham (1998). Students regularly made points, either general substantive statements, or neat and coherent statements about similarity and difference, and substantiated these points with appropriate qualifying evidence, occasionally about specific individuals, or specific primary sources.

The students' presentation of their own judgement discussed within was puzzling, as it is difficult to isolate it to a specific issue of the way I or my students understood similarity and difference. I have not experienced this type of casual, almost colloquial discussion before. Students' language in previous lessons was tightly analytical, so it would be unreasonable to suggest an issue with the

class, and their understanding of the conventions of historical explanation. Perhaps, students genuinely felt compelled or even provoked to react subjectively and morally to the horrifying persecution that they had learned about and were now discussing in their work, or that students were deploying some kind of comparative approach to make meaning. In addition, this was the first time that students had engaged in historical writing concerned so closely with individual experience, and perhaps they subconsciously emphasised those in the past that they were writing about. I was aware of the discussion within literature on the teaching of the Holocaust as a moral or historical issue (Kinloch, 1998). I had assumed that my enquiry was strictly historical – I wanted students to make and analytical judgements about the similarities and differences between the different people persecuted.

Recommendations

- Nevertheless, the analysis of my data, and the subsequent characterisation and discussion of prominent themes has allowed me to develop a number of recommendations both for my own practice, and for further curricular thinking:

- Ongoing in my subsequent practice, I need to be more reflective on the quality and formulation of my learning objectives, ensuring that they reflect fully and explicitly the exact process of conceptual reasoning I want students to engage with. In addition, there needs to be more theorising on the specific types and forms of conceptual reasoning students are to engage with to come to reasoned and rigorous argument about similarity and difference, in order to allow teachers to easily conceptualise the process.

- The process of contesting variation and complexity during the teaching phase helps students conceptualise and synthesise complex interpretations that they are ready to argue coherently when it comes to a point of extended writing. Perhaps there is space for some action research to highlight the efficacy of activities and pedagogical strategies that stimulate contest and debate over similarity and difference, building on those proposed by Black (2012).

- Another potential avenue for action research could be a similar exploration of the effect of structured intervention and activities focusing on the application of analytical language can allow students to think carefully about how to reason more effectively and with greater resolution about the conceptual nature of comparison.

- A final point for proposed research could be another exploration of the effect of practical pedagogical strategies to ingrain the practice of using substantive comparison between the lived experiences of people in the past to make inferences and more complex historical meaning about the historical contexts of actors. Asking What can be learned from differences or similarities between people in the past.

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Appendix 1

Full Lesson Sequence

EQ: What did it mean to be a *victim* of the Holocaust?			
Lesson Question	Learning Objectives	Content	Activities
Who lived in the Nazi Ghettos?	*Define* substantive concepts key to the enquiry, such as the *Holocaust* and a 'victim'. *Identify* the various different individuals and social groups persecuted by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. *Highlight* tentative similarities and differences between these groups.	• Warsaw Ghetto as a site of persecution. • Initial identification of different groups: Jews, Romani/Sinti/Jehovah's Witnesses/Disabled People/Gay men and women/Black people. • Disputed definition of the Holocaust.	ISM: Who walked over the Chlodna Bridge? Tease out generalisations – "The Jews" Thinking Point: How would you define the Holocaust? Card Sort: Who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto? Students puzzle through different photos, discerning the existence of a number of different groups of people. Writing Task: Students revisit their definitions, writing a second one. Input: Disputed definition of the Holocaust. Concluding Thinking Point: How does this develop our understanding of what it meant to be a victim of the Holocaust?
Did all Jews go like "Sheep to the Slaughter"	*Explain* some of the reasons for, extent, and nature of Nazi persecution. *Identify* the interpretation of Jewish victims as 'passive receivers' *Challenge* this interpretation through a close focus on alternative interpretations of Jewish victims of 'active resistors', and information about different groups of Jews, such as the Jewish Fighting Organization, and individuals such as Morderchai Aneilwicz.	• Bruno Bettelheim's interpretation of Jews as willingly going like "sheep to the slaughter". • Alternative interpretations of other historians. • Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1943. • Mordechai Anielwicz	ISM: Berlin Cemetery Memorial – How does this portray the Jewish victims? Reading Task: The Argument of Bruno Bettelheim Annotation Task: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial – How does this differ? Source Analysis: What does the evidence suggest? Written Concluding Task: Some Jews/Other Jews
How did the Nazi's treat the other enemies of the race-based state?	*Identify* the experiences of other "enemies of the race-based state". *Compare* the reasons for their persecution between different groups. *Categorise* the different Nazi laws based on the overall effect they had on people's lives.	• Experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses. • Experiences of Romani/Sinti • Nuremberg Laws • Oral history as a form of evidence.	ISM: Erich Frost, Forward You Witnesses – How does this build on our understanding? Writing Task: Erich Frost, Oral Testimony- What can this tell us about reasons for persecution? Comparative Source Analysis: Romani/Sinti Reasons for Persecution – How does this compare? Highlighting Task: How did the Nazi laws effect different people? Extended Writing Task: What did it mean to be a Witness or Romani/Sinti witness of the Holocaust?

Who did the Nazi's think was living a life unworthy of life?	*Identify* the reasons for and nature of persecution of different disabled people by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust. *Understand* the differences between the extent and nature of persecution of different disabled people during the Holocaust. *Express* a judgement about what "it meant to a disabled victim of the Holocaust"	• Nazi Anti-Disability Propaganda • Aktion T-4 Program • Treatment of people with different disabilities.	ISM: Nazi Poster – Disability as an economic Burden. Thinking Points: Different disabilities – introduce variation. Source Analysis Task: Nazi Posters – Why were disabled people targeted? Continuum Judgement: Most Severe to Least Severe Persecution – Introducing variation in experience. Written Concluding Task: What did it mean to be a disabled victim of the Holocaust? – Express judgements about similarity and difference within.
What did it mean to be Gay during Nazi rule?	*Identify* the reasons behind persecution of homosexuals under the Third Reich. Describe the persecution of Gay men and Women. *Compare* the experiences of these two groups.	• The Life of Albrecht Becker • The different types of persecution Gay men faced. • Paragraph 175. • Lesbian Experiences of the Holocaust: Scholarship from Samuel Clowes Huneker • Experiences of Berlin Lesbians in German Courts.	ISM: Photograph, Berlin Dancing Hall - Who does this depict? Does this image surprise you? Source Analysis Task: What can we learn from the Oral Testimony of Albrecht Becker? How did the nature/extent of persecution change over time? Source Analysis Task: Berlin Court Case Briefings – Four Berlin Lesbians – How can we compare within and against? Written Concluding Task: What did it mean to be Gay during Nazi rule? Students compare and generalise, using evidence of the individuals they have studied.
What did it mean to be Black in the Third Reich?	*Identify* the reasons behind persecution of Black people. Classify the varied experience of persecution of different Black people in Germany. *Compare* the experiences of these two groups.	• Black Experience in Colonial Germany • Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler	ISM: *'Enterete Musik'* Poster - What can you *infer* from this 1938 Nazi poster about how black people were perceived at the time? Input: Black People in Colonial Germany Source Analysis: Mein Kampf – How can this help us explain why Black people were targeted? Source Comparison: What can the lived experiences of four black people in Germany tell us about how black people were targeted in Nazi Germany? Written Concluding Task: What did it mean to be Black in the Third Reich?
Assessment Lesson: What did it mean to be a *victim* of the Holocaust?			