Art therapy postcards

How does a personal arts-based process inform the development of an art therapy protocol to address intergenerational perpetrator trauma?

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Bio

Alisa Ray lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. She has been working in the community arts sector since 2005, trained as a Community Art Counsellor in 2011 and is part of the first cohort of art therapy students to be trained at a South African university (University of Johannesburg).

Abstract

This research article draws on a master's thesis. This historical narrative emerges from a familial relationship with the artist Irmin Henkel, the author's step-grandfather. Henkel was known as the official portrait painter of the 1960s apartheid government Cabinet. The approach repurposed family photographs into postcards to reflect on the past. The analytical framing of the study is grounded in inherited perpetrator trauma theories that reverberate with conditions in post-apartheid South Africa. A gap in the literature on trauma beyond apartheid is the enduring relationship between inherited perpetrator trauma and toxic shame. A heuristic self-study and arts-based approach were used as the vehicle through which I convey personal insights of my family history and drive home their meaning. My analytical approach derives from dialectical thinking as a way of grappling with more than one perspective. The creation of postcards from historical family narratives successfully uncovered three main themes: guilt, denial, and toxic shame. Because toxic shame is avoided, shunned, and kept secret, I advance a five-step protocol that art therapists could use to address inherited perpetrator trauma. However, the

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protocol has not been tested beyond the self-study. In extending this protocol to a broader South African society, the larger contribution of this study is to suggest the advantages of the use of the protocol in confronting inherited trauma and making toxic shame conscious, thereby preventing a repeat of past historical transgressions and encouraging healthier relationships to self, family, community and a broader South African society.

Key words: inherited perpetrator trauma, post apartheid South Africa, heuristic self-study, art-based approach, toxic shame, art therapy postcards

Introduction

The art therapy technique of creating postcards that confront a family history of artistic collaboration with the apartheid regime is the focus of this paper. The study is grounded in inherited perpetrator trauma theories that reverberate with conditions in South Africa. A gap in the literature on trauma beyond apartheid is the enduring relationship between inherited perpetrator trauma and toxic shame. To fill this gap, a heuristic self-study and arts-based approach were used as the vehicle through which I try to convey personal insights. The master's self-study showed that the art therapy postcard technique offered opportunities to address my personal trauma and to nurture my capacity as a more fully self-aware and emerging student art therapist. The results were preliminary as this technique's application on others had not yet been tested. The larger contribution of this study, therefore, is the use of a heuristic arts-based technique to create a five-step protocol that art therapists could use to treat inherited perpetrator trauma.

In this research article, I use parts of the protocol and the lens of inherited perpetrator trauma theories to discuss seven postcards from the master's thesis. The article explores these postcards and the reflective writing that accompanied them in my master's thesis and proposes the effectiveness of using family photographs in an art therapy technique to confront unconscious toxic shame and denial related to historical perpetrator narratives.

My family legacy

A fire in Parliament in January 2022 brought back memories of my step-grandfather Irmin Henkel's portrait of former apartheid president Hendrick Frensch Verwoerd and the Verwoerd Cabinet (see Figure 1). The paintings

that my step-grandfather had been commissioned to create during the height of apartheid rule in South Africa were stored in a cellar under the National Assembly in Cape Town after South Africa became a democracy in 1994. Henkel painted Verwoerd, created a series of stamps, and worked on a bust of the 'apartheid architect', as Verwoerd is commonly known, to commemorate his life in the wake of his assassination in 1966. Verwoerd's legacy is intertwined with the racist apartheid laws passed on his watch. A year after Verwoerd's death, Berna Maree (1967) records Henkel's reputation as the "painter of prime ministers" in 1960s apartheid South Africa because of his portraits of other apartheid ministers.

At the time of the Parliament fire, I had been closely following the restitution of artefacts related to victims of historical trauma from museums in America and Europe. I had been researching possible topics for my master's thesis on art therapy at the University of Johannesburg. Art therapy in the museum space is effective both in creating response art (Linesch, 2004) and in applying psychodynamic ways of interpreting art (Walters, 2020).

I was surprised that, given my interest in historical pieces of art and art therapy in the museum space, I had almost forgotten my own family legacy. Figure 2 shows my grandmother pouring coffee for her husband during a painting break and links historical trauma narratives directly to my childhood family home. All the apartheid artworks created by my step-grandfather had been made in his Waterkloof studio, the Palazzo. After Henkel died in 1977, the Palazzo continued to be our weekly Sunday family gathering space and my cherished childhood source of comfort. The visceral response of nausea that I felt when I first found Figure 1 on a Twitter feed alerted me to the unresolved inner turmoil that I had perhaps avoided with my 'forgetting'. Was I in denial regarding intergenerational perpetrator trauma? What is needed to address this question is a conceptual framework that opens new spaces and understandings of intergenerational trauma in the South African context.

Figure 1: The painting of Verwoerd and his Cabinet was removed from South Africa's Parliament on 25 January 1996. (Photo sourced from Twitter: Africa Bush Wars @ModernConflict, 26 January 2020)

Figure 2: My grandmother pouring coffee for my step-grandfather in the Palazzo during a break while he was painting Verwoerd's Cabinet (circa 1967). (Photograph in author's collection)

Inherited perpetrator trauma

My aim in this article is to contribute to an understanding of inherited perpetrator trauma using the art therapy technique of creating postcards from old family photographs to confront intergenerational perpetrator trauma in the South African context. In considering the salience of the concept of intergenerational perpetrator trauma to my own avoidance of addressing unresolved trauma, the centrality of the concept of toxic shame, articulated by Luna Dolezal and Matthew Gibson (2022) and Judith Herman (1992), for individuals who have experienced trauma is the vehicle through which I try to convey more concrete insights. Herman (1992, p. 33) notes that while there is no unified approach to trauma, "most agree that it entails an event that involves threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death". Less familiar, however, is the process by which toxic shame "shapes post-traumatic states" (Dolezal & Gibson, 2022, p. 5). As White et al. (2009, p. 3) argue, trauma is "a very narrow concept" that misses other complexities. Central to these complexities in the South African context is a consideration of toxic shame, along with its effects on intergenerational perpetrator trauma. In his definition of toxic shame, John Bradshaw (2002, p. 4) notes that "shame as a healthy human emotion can be transformed into shame as a state of being … [which] is to believe that one's being is flawed, that one is defective as a human being. [Shame] becomes toxic and dehumanising".

Conceptually, Dolezal and Gibson (2022, p. 3) note that trauma is "a far-ranging concept that covers a broad range of experiences". For the purposes of this study, I have identified three key concepts in current literature. The first is the theory of the intergenerational cycle of repetition that characterises unresolved trauma (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2016). The second is Bernard Giesen's theory of historical perpetrator trauma (2004). The third is Katharina Rothe's (2012) psychoanalytic understanding of shame and guilt as it relates to inherited perpetrator trauma.

Although the effects of historical and cultural traumas on future generations and the transmission of intergenerational trauma are still an emerging area of research, Tori DeAngelis (2019, p. 2) notes that "transgenerational effects are not only psychological but familial, social, cultural, neurobiological, and possibly even genetic as well". In considering transgenerational theories, Kathy Livingston (2010, p. 208) writes that "similarities between Holocaust survivor and perpetrator families are

noteworthy with respect to the transmission of a family legacy". The guilt of the perpetrator, Livingston (2010) notes, is often felt with more intensity in second and third generations.

Bernard Giesen's (2004) theory of historical perpetrator trauma mentions the complexity of individual and collective responses of the German people in relation to the Holocaust. Giesen (2004) identifies various stages of response that cross over generations: the denial of the trauma is one response, the blaming of the outside and demonisation of Nazism is another response. A further response is the expulsion of the perpetrators (exemplified by the Nuremberg trials). At a more general societal level, Gilad Hirschberger (2018) defines collective trauma as an event that shatters the fabric of society and causes a crisis of meaning. Hirschberger (2018) writes that for perpetrators, the memory of the trauma poses a threat to collective identity. Thus, the denial and minimisation of events are often a defence against an existential threat. Acknowledging responsibility is often followed by disidentification with the group (Hirschberger, 2018). Despite contextual differences, the link between Holocaust studies and the South African context is a useful starting point, not least because of the dearth of literature on intergenerational perpetrator trauma in South Africa, to illuminate the centrality of shame for individuals who have experienced inherited trauma.

The authors draw six conclusions from this study. Most notably, they conclude that the third generation of the perpetrator's group is more likely to feel shame, guilt, and responsibility for past transgressions than the generation responsible for perpetrating the collective crimes (Paez et al., 2006). This group also shows up with the defence mechanisms of denial or minimisation and positivistic reconstruction of collective crime (Paez et al., 2006).

Katharina Rothe (2012), in her writing about anti-Semitism in present-day Germany, uses a psychoanalytic lens to explain an intergenerational transference of guilt and shame related to the Holocaust that is inextricably intertwined with defences against these emotions. She sees the anti-Semitism of today as an unconscious defence mechanism against guilt and shame. The solution to dealing with anti-Semitism, she suggests, is to make these processes conscious. Recent studies show two responses to shame: a pro-social response that wishes to repair a defect in the self and a self-defensive

response that protects against condemnation and rejection (Gausel et al., 2015).

Art therapy protocol

In my master's study, I suggested an art therapy protocol within the paradigm of an addiction treatment model to treat intergenerational perpetrator trauma. I have a decade's experience facilitating art sessions at an addiction recovery centre. I am aware that denial is one of the key defences in relation to the inner shame of addiction. Lynn Johnson (1990) and Marie Wilson (2000 & 2012) write about the efficacy of art therapy in transforming shame in addiction recovery settings. The art therapist Vibeke Skov (2018) also notes that the creativity of artmaking can be used to form a new self-image that excludes shame. The addiction setting thus informed my decision to use a self-study of artmaking to research possible denial and toxic shame in relation to inherited perpetrator trauma.

My research method for my master's thesis followed Clark Moustakas' (1990) six-step heuristic process of initial engagement, immersion phase, incubation phase, illumination phase, and explication and creative synthesis phases. Richard Carolan (2011, p. 200), in a discussion on methods of art therapy research, explains that the word 'heuristic' comes from a Greek word and is related to a form of the word 'eureka'. The Greek mathematician Archimedes exclaimed "Eureka" while lying in his bathtub and having a breakthrough understanding of the relationship between displacement and gravity. Carolan (2011, p. 200) explains that a heuristic research model emphasises the researcher's internal experiences that access tacit knowledge. He goes on to say that Moustakas emphasised intuition as an integral part of integrating seen and unseen knowledge. Carolan (2011, p. 200) notes that the heuristic model that relies on inner self-knowledge is its strength and its greatest challenge because if knowledge is to grow, the researcher must also grow.

I used dialectical thinking as a method to control my bias in my research. Dialectics is an approach that integrates seemingly opposing forces, and the "philosophy suggests a heterogeneous world in which reality is neither black nor white nor grey" (Swales & Heard, 2009, p. 17). This way of thinking complements the heuristic method of integrating outer and inner knowledge and embraces the whole of the lived experience of the researcher.

In the immersion phase, I created 12 postcards of my memories of my step-grandfather's studio, the Palazzo, and 12 postcards related to his parliamentary artworks. A written reflection accompanied each postcard. This research article considers only those postcards that were created from family photographs.

I present the five-step protocol developed in the master's thesis below. This research article focuses on identifying toxic shame and denial, Steps 1 to 3 of the protocol and touches on Step 4 of the protocol in that I revisit the trauma by taking another look at these seven postcards. This article does not address the resolution of the identified trauma, Steps 4 and 5.

Protocol

Step 1: Creating postcards

The client is invited to create postcards that gather personal memories of the family. Various art mediums, techniques, mementoes, and/or photographs can also help in this process. Material related directly to inherited perpetrator acts is also visually expressed on postcards. Gathering this material is a way to counter the denial of an inherited toxic shame. The use of museums and artefacts in accessing this material may be explored.

Step 2: Creating a box

A box is created to contain the postcards using mediums, techniques, and images suitable to the client under the guidance of an art therapist. The box can hold both precious and difficult memories and parallels the therapeutic concepts of holding and containing.

Step 3: Making an inventory

An inventory is made of emotions consciously and unconsciously expressed in postcard artworks. The therapist is aware of denial as a defence mechanism and offers an alternate perspective where applicable.

Step 4: Processing emotions

Art responses are encouraged to process the emotional content of the postcards. Material is visited and revisited, and postcards are taken out of the box, returned, revealed, and concealed as the therapeutic need arises. The art therapist is aware of denial, toxic shame, and pro-social responses to shame in working with this trauma. Artworks that externalise difficult emotions are worked through in the therapy setting.

Step 5: Transcending trauma

A recreating of the self that transcends the trauma of shame is explored through artmaking. This protocol has not yet been tested beyond the self-study stage and is still in its development stage. Suggestions were made in the master's thesis that the use of the museum space could be considered for applying the protocol.

Methods

The seven postcards discussed in this paper are the result of Step 1 of the protocol, which suggests including visual material that represents historical perpetrator narratives. The postcards show photographs of my step-grandfather engaged in the various stages of painting the apartheid-era Cabinet under Verwoerd (see Figures 4, 7, and 9) and his construction of a bust of Verwoerd (see Figure 7). This is direct visual evidence of my step-grandfather's intimate association with the previous apartheid government. The other photographs chosen for inclusion in this article are a photographic portrait of Henkel's father posing as a model for the Cabinet painting (see Figure 3), and a photograph of a group of tennis friends (see Figure 8) that serve as models for Henkel's positioning of his sketch of apartheid ministers for the Cabinet painting (see Figure 9), and my grandmother pouring coffee for Henkel (see Figure 1). I also created a postcard of this scene (see Figure 5).

I have taken these seven postcards from a box painted with a lotus flower. In accordance with Step 2 of the protocol, this box was created to contain and hold both precious and difficult memories. I look at the lotus flower, and I am reminded that working through the difficult emotions attached to these seven postcards are the muddy undercurrents of a complicated history. The value of confronting this past may lead to the blooming of a new understanding and

recreating of the self, represented by the lotus flower. Step 4 of the protocol notes that no linear process is involved in dealing with denial, toxic shame and guilt, the three components defining an inherited perpetrator trauma. The postcards can be revisited, taken out of the box, and worked through again.

Step 3 of the protocol is inspired by the 12-Step Tradition that requires an honest inventory of conscious and unconscious emotions. It is this step that I revisited in relation to the seven postcards. I re-read my initial written responses to the postcards and explored the artworks again through the lens of inherited perpetrator trauma theories.

Findings

The seven postcards I present and discuss here are taken from a larger sample of postcards used in my master's study. The identified postcards are photographs that visually link the Verwoerd Cabinet artworks with my family history.

Figure 3's written reflection shows my denial response. I wonder how Pappi's* father (who is a social democrat and in opposition to Nazism in Germany) can support his son's commission by the apartheid government. I choose to paint his father's sweater a blue that reminds me of his painted portrait by his son and conjures up images of warm, soft wool. It is more comfortable for me to think of warm family connections between father and son and to distract myself with opposition politics to fascism than to accept that Pappi's father is also an accomplice. I note the dialectic here of a desired connection to family and belonging and desired disconnection to a historical perpetrator narrative. [1]

Figure 4 shows a dramatic photograph of Pappi gesturing in front of his painting under construction. The week I create this postcard, our cohort visited an exhibition of Jennifer Kopping's artworks that narrate her family history reflecting an inherited Holocaust trauma. Kopping's artworks also use family photographs, but her artworks of paper constructions are bright, intricate, and huge. They are memorials to her family and draw in an audience. My family photographs are kept contained on the small postcards I create and are hidden in the box. Creating gigantic artwork from my family photographs that show a perpetrator's legacy would be uncomfortable.

1 *Pappi is what I called my step-grandfather, Irmin Henkel.

Gilad Hirschberger (2018) writes that for perpetrators, the memory of the trauma poses a threat to collective identity.

Figure 3: Artwork by author. *Postcard 13. Irmin Henkel's father poses for the Cabinet painting.* 2022. Acrylic paint over printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

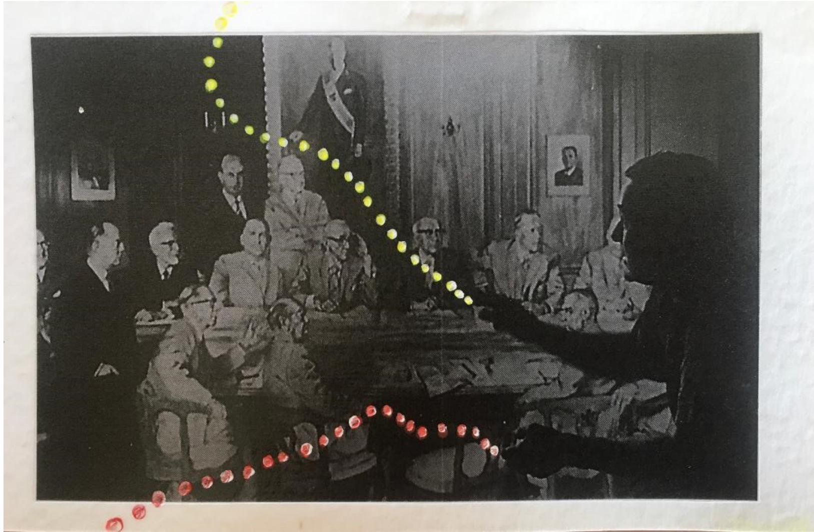

Figure 4: Artwork by author. *Postcard 15. Irmin Henkel's silhouette against the Cabinet painting*. 2022. Acrylic paint over printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

Thus, the denial and minimisation of events are often a defence against an existential threat. The smallness of my postcards can be seen as a minimisation. Here too, there is a dialectic. It is uncomfortable to bring my family history into the public space, but there is also a need to express denial, shame, and guilt.

Figure 5 focuses on my grandmother's role. I give her bright orange hair and a garland of flowers. I wonder if this is an unconscious need of mine to remove her to a tropical island far away from apartheid politics. I want my grandmother not to be implicated in any of this. I have a conscious wish for my grandmother to be a fiery feminist, but I know that she upholds the patriarchy.

Her notions of boy children are more important than girl children. It occurs to me that her stance also suggests a defence mechanism. My grandmother writes a book on Pappi, making these photographs accessible to me. She unconsciously gives me the family perpetrator legacy with which to work.

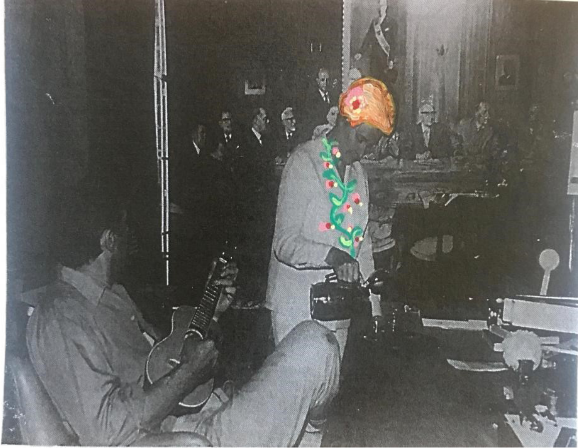

Figure 5: Artwork by author. *Postcard 16. Giving my grandmother a new hairdo.* 2022. Acrylic paint on printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

Figure 6 shows Pappi discussing the Cabinet painting with the speaker of Parliament, Henning Klopper and Piet Meiring. I use acrylic paint to colour the antique German wardrobe that I recognise behind the men. I have fond memories of this wardrobe relating to my grandmother and myself engaged in imaginative play. This dreamlike state is also the focus for me in this postcard.

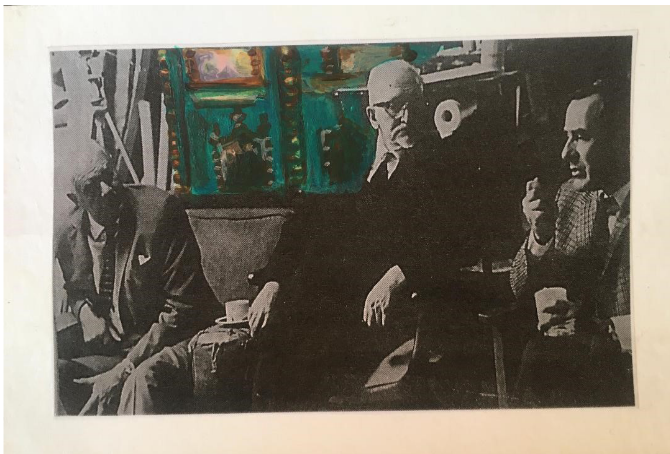

Figure 6: Artwork by author. *Postcard 19. Parliamentary representatives visiting Irmin Henkel.* 2022. Acrylic paint on printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

I feel a childlike defiance in me. I do not know these men from Parliament who are visiting Pappi in our Palazzo. It has nothing at all to do with me. That they sit in front of my magic wardrobe is almost a shock.

Having to hold the good and the bad of my family story is an important therapeutic outcome. The complexity of facing the paradoxical elements of my family history – the parts that I am proud of and the parts that are more difficult to accept – puts me at risk of using the defence mechanism of "splitting" developed by Melanie Klein (1940 & 1950 & 1952). Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) has been shown to be an effective treatment in aiding an acceptance and understanding of opposing emotional phenomena (Dimeff & Linehan 2011; Linehan 2015). I know from my work at a psychiatric recovery centre that integrating opposing emotional phenomena is important for mental health.

Figure 7 shows Pappi working on his bust of Verwoerd. I use acrylic paint to make Verwoerd look like a clown. Am I hoping that ridiculing the reviled architect of apartheid will somehow make me feel better? Instead, I feel ashamed of my creation. I wonder if this means I am a Verwoerd supporter on an unconscious level. Perhaps I use the clown imagery to distract myself from the powerful image of Pappi so directly engaging with the bust of Verwoerd. This bust is bound to evoke strong embodied reactions in the South African environment.

Lynn Froggett and Myna Trustram (2015, p. 494) reflect on the theory of object relations in the museum space and write that:

> "The objects in object relations theory have usually been thought about in terms of relations with significant others […] However, for the museum, the intrinsic nature of the object is a vital matter of interest".

Froggett and Trustram (2015, p. 484) also refer to Christopher Bollas (2009) and his notion of an evocative object "that resonates with personal and cultural significance, producing chains of association, inciting emotional responses and impelling imaginative activity".

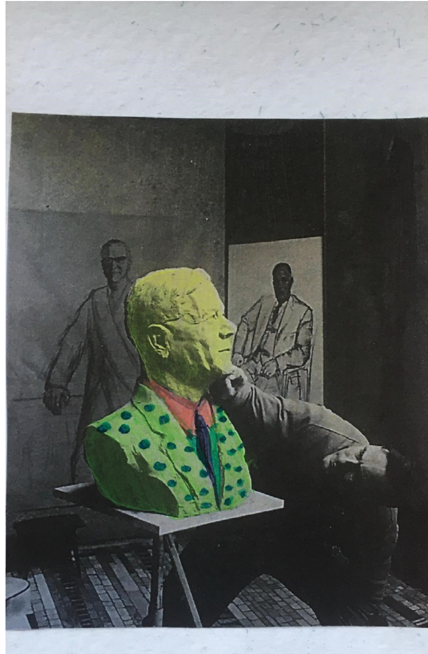

Figure 7: Artwork by the author. *Postcard 20. Irmin Henkel working on his bust of HF Verwoerd*. 2022. Acrylic paint over printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

This evocative object creates an uncomfortableness for me. My uneasiness with portraying Verwoerd as a clown may be due to my not wanting to trivialise my inherited perpetrator trauma. A study in the field of group psychology related to collective guilt and shame can be applied to the South African context. The authors draw six conclusions from this study. As mentioned earlier in this article, they conclude that the third generation from the perpetrator group is more likely to feel shame, guilt, and responsibility for past transgressions than the generation responsible for perpetrating the collective crimes (Paez et al., 2006). I would fall into this category. Toxic shame is a trauma. Gershan Kaufman (1996, p. 5) writes that:

> "No other affect is more deeply disturbing [than shame.] Like a wound made from the inside by an unseen hand, shame disrupts the natural functioning of the self […] In the history of people, shame has always been associated with honour and pride. Even risking death may seem preferable to suffering the intolerable indignity of shame".

Figure 8 shows Pappi's tennis friends posing as models for the Cabinet painting. I add a tennis ball bouncing off the table with green acrylic paint that contrasts strongly with the black and white of the photograph.

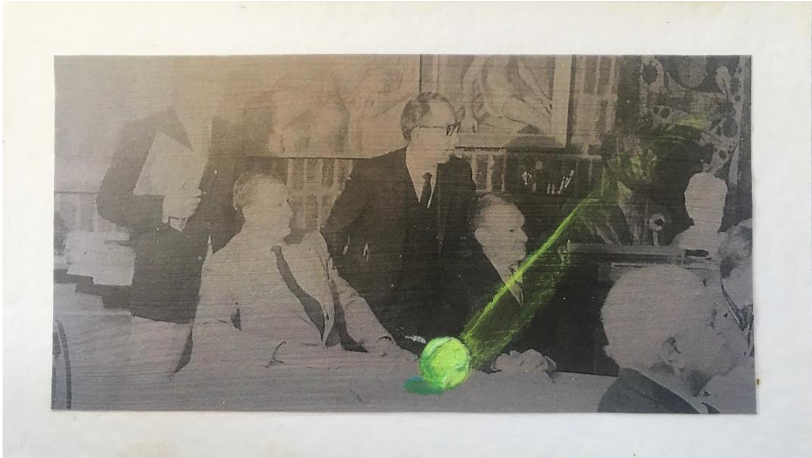

Figure 8: Artwork by author. *Postcard 22. Irmin Henkel's tennis friends posing for the Cabinet painting.* 2022. Acrylic paint on printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

Thinking about Pappi's tennis friends visiting his home to pose for this apartheid painting also places his friends as accomplices. Likely, none of these friends nor Pappi see themselves as accomplices to historical acts of perpetrators in South Africa. South Africa of the 1960s does not have a media that portrays the apartheid state as acting in violation of human rights. Pappi is a medical doctor as well as an artist. I imagine the fun the friends have posing as ministers and wonder about the food, drink, and celebration that accompany the modelling.

Marianne Hirsch's (2009) theory of post-memory speaks to constructed social narratives. If, as Hirsch argues, traumatic histories can influence future generations even if they did not directly experience the trauma, can this also be true for inherited perpetrator trauma? Memory studies (Hirsch, 2009) have shown the potential for media to construct traumatic memory. Is my third-generation trauma a result of a change in the public narrative since the ending of the apartheid regime in 1994? I wonder if my portrayal of the tennis party will be met with moral disapproval. In a piece of literary criticism, Katherine Stafford's (2014, p. 1) exploration of the "ethical consequences of using a

postmemorial framework for perpetrators" explains how the trauma of the novel is not in the suffering but in the guilt and responsibility. She believes that the narrative holds "serious ethical and philosophical consequences", and although she says the novel holds fresh perspectives on current hegemonic ones, she feels there is a "subtle pardoning [of] crimes of the past that should be recognised and condemned" (Stafford, 2014, p. 16). Does a dialectical approach allow for both the acknowledgement of past crimes as well as other aspects of life without moral transgression?

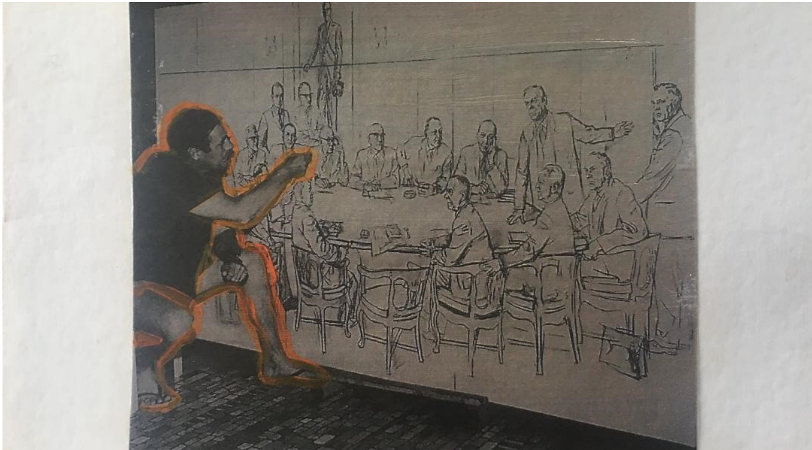

Figure 9: Artwork by author. *Postcard 23. Irmin Henkel's preliminary charcoal sketch.* 2022. Acrylic paint over printed paper. 16cm x 9cm.

Figure 9 shows Pappi at work on a preliminary charcoal sketch. I outline his form in orange and think about my role in narrating his story. I feel guilty for portraying him without his permission. He is no longer alive to discuss any of these thoughts or theories on perpetrator trauma. I feel sad that my family legacy is intertwined with historical perpetrator narratives and that I cannot celebrate my grandfather as an accomplished artist without also remembering his association with the apartheid regime.

Giesen (2004), in his illuminative writing about Nazi perpetrator trauma and German national identity, writes about the importance of remembering not to repeat the past. I hold this notion in one hand, but in the other hand, I hold disenfranchised grief. Kathy Livingston (2010) writes that disenfranchised grief occurs when the community fails to recognise death as

important or to acknowledge the impact on the survivors. Livingston writes about the legacy of Nazism. She writes that "the silencing norms and grieving rules within post-war German society have been referred to as an 'inability to mourn'" (Livingston, 2010, p. 211). She concludes that disenfranchised and unmourned grief can be passed down through the generations. It is not only death that needs to be mourned. Other losses need acknowledging, and one loss for me is not being able to celebrate my grandfather as a South African artist valued for his work.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn on an art therapy protocol developed in my master's thesis to address intergenerational perpetrator trauma in the South African context. There was a focus on the postcards created from family photographs in a directive from Step 1 that invites curiosity into historical perpetrator narratives.

Applying acrylic paint onto prints of old family photographs successfully generated associations with the material, allowing for a deeper exploration of unconscious toxic shame. Through the lens of perpetrator trauma theories, I was able to explore my denial, guilt, and shame responses to an inherited apartheid perpetrator narrative. The exploration was an uncomfortable process; safely keeping the postcards in a box was a welcome way of containing the material. Re-looking at the seven postcards after months made me aware of the denial and toxic shame still present in me in confronting my family legacy. The family photographs, in particular, touch on a sensitivity of identity with an inherited perpetrator narrative.

The postcard as a method of identifying an inherited perpetrator trauma suggests the need to expose and share this trauma with an other in a safe, therapeutic relationship. In this study, the client invites something to be witnessed, received and digested, allowing something to be metabolised as in Wilfred Bion's (1962 & 1970) concept of containing function. The re-looking at the seven postcards and the new material that I accessed through the writing of this article suggests the importance of working alongside an art therapist to explore the unconscious toxic shame and denial that is so difficult for the self to uncover.

Step 4 of the 12-Step Tradition of treating addiction (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1952) sees sharing the most uncomfortable parts of one's

history with an other as an essential step in recovery. The act of expressing a toxic shame, taking it out of the unconscious inner world, and sharing it with an other may have a freeing effect.

A reparative act can remedy feelings of guilt but not of shame. Kaufmann (1996) differentiates guilt from shame in that shame is an emotion to the feeling of the whole self being worthless, usually masked through avoidance "by placing it outside of conscious awareness" (Sanderson, 2015, p. 5), whereas guilt refers to having done something wrong. Addressing toxic shame requires "an understanding of why and how an individual experiences their shame", which Dolezal and Gibson (2022, p. 6) refer to as "the 3A's": acknowledging shame, avoiding shame and addressing shame.

The ability to accept one's historical identity and grieve the associations to historical transgressions is part of the process of confronting an inherited perpetrator trauma.

Samantha Vice (2010) proposes that white people living in South Africa must accept and live with their shame related to colonial and apartheid injustices and humbly remove themselves from the public arena. Vice's response speaks to toxic shame that makes a person feel worthless. Kaufman (1996, p. 7) writes that the effect of negative and toxic shame "is the principal impediment in all relationships [...] shame wounds not only the self, but also the family, an ethnic or minority group within a dominant culture, or even an entire nation [...] racial, ethnic, and religious tensions are inevitable consequences of shame". It is for this reason that processing toxic shame in relation to South African historical perpetrator narratives is necessary. I do not think Vice's stance in this instance is helpful or healthy and perpetuates the intergenerational traumas of South African history. As Rothe (2012) has noted, possibly the most destructive form of shame is hidden unconscious toxic shame that can repeat past historical transgressions.

The unease in representing the perpetrator's narrative has been noted in Stafford's (2012) literary research, the smallness of my postcards and the tendency to put apartheid-era artworks out of sight. Brenda Schmahmann (2020, p. 143) has written about apartheid-era statues on South Africa's university campuses, noting that:

> "Relegating monuments to storage facilities where all traces of their histories are blotted out can amount to denial. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that removal

> has sometimes been a procedure of choice among those looking to prevent rather than enable social transformation".

'Removing monuments' speaks to my experience of 'forgetting' about my grandfather's apartheid-era artworks. It took a fire in Parliament to ignite my interest in uncovering my unconscious toxic shame.

A dedicated public museum programme that exhibits evocative historical artworks that deal with inherited perpetrator trauma would be an important resource in confronting what is largely invisible. The motivation to make the museum space available for this work is to create a healthier self that creates healthier relations with others: family, community, and society. There is also the possibility of extending the use of postcards to include sharing past historical traumas between victims and perpetrators. The use of postcard processes for reconciliatory processes in South Africa in the field of education has been shown to be effective (Ferreira, 2008).

When treating inherited perpetrator trauma, the art therapist would follow the suggested five-step protocol and follow through with artmaking that externalises emotions and recreates a sense of self beyond toxic shame. There is the opportunity to further this research by studying the results of its application. There is also the possibility for arts therapists from disciplines such as dance, drama, or music to adapt the described processes for their modalities. The implementation of the protocol is at the discretion of the art therapist or student art therapist registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. This article has focused on the identification of denial and shame. It is the most important step in confronting inherited perpetrator trauma.

I agree with Michelle Anderson's (2018) view of South Africa's past that a more nuanced approach to our conception of the perpetrator is required to recover from our traumatic history. The lens of perpetrator trauma theories enables the art therapist to work with specific tools in looking and re-looking at the family images situated in a historical narrative. The value in doing this work is recovering from often-unconscious shame.

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